JOSEPH
HERGESHEIMER

THE THREE BLACK PENNYS

A NOVEL

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A DEDICATION

Dear John Hemphill

This is a record and act of memory of you at Dower House — of June nights on the porch with the foliage of the willow tree powdered against the stars the white panelled hearth of the yellow room in smouldering winter dusks dinner with the candles wavering in tepid April airs and the blue envelopment of late September noons A quiet reach like the old grey house and green fields the little valleys filled with trees and placid town beyond the hill where the calendar of our days and companionship is set

Joseph Hergesheimer

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I THE FURNACE

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A TWILIGHT like blue dust sifted into the shallow fold of the thickly wooded hills It was early October but a crisping frost had already stamped the maple trees with gold, the Spanish oaks were hung with patches of wine red the sumach was brilliant in the darkening underbrush A pattern of wild geese flying low and unconcerned above the hills wavered against the serene ashen evening Howat Penny standing in the comparative clearing of a road decided that the shifting regular flight would not come close enough for a shot He dropped the butt of his gun to the ground Then he raised it again examining the hammer the flint was loose unsatisfactory There was a probability that it would miss firing

He had no intention of hunting the geese With the drooping of day his keenness had evaporated an habitual indifference strengthened permeating him He turned his dark young face toward the trans

England and the study of metallurgy and a Mr Winscombe come out to the Provinces in connection with the Maryland boundary dispute accompanied by his wife All this Howat Penny regarded with profound distaste necessary social and conversational forms repelled him And it annoyed his father when he sat apparently morose against the wall or retired solitary to his room

He would get supper here they would be glad to have him at the house of Peter Heydrick the manager of the Furnace. Half turning he could see the dwelling at his back — a small grey stone rectangle with a narrow portico on its solid face and a pale glimmer of candles in the lower windows The ground immediately about it was cleared of brush and little trees affording Peter Heydrick a necessary unobstructed view of the Furnace stack while sitting in his house or when aroused at night The dwelling was inviting at once slipping into the dusk and emerging by reason of the warm glow within Mrs Heydrick too was an excellent cook there would be plenty of venison roast partridge okra soup Afterwards under a late moon he could go back to Myrtle Forge or he might stay at the Heydricks all night and to-morrow kill such a buck as he had lost

The twilight darkened beneath the trees the surrounding hills lost their forms in the east the distance merged into the oncoming night but the west was still translucent, green There was a faint

movement in the leaves by the roadside and a grey fox crossed flattened on the ground, and disappeared Howat Penny could see the liquid gleam of its eyes as it watched him From the hill by the coal house came the heavy beating of wild turkeys wings

He could go to Peter Heydrick's, where the venison would be excellent and Mrs Heydrick was celebrated for her guinea pickle with cucumbers but the Heydricks had no daughter and the Gilkans had Thomas Gilkan was only a founderman his house had one room below and a partition above and Mrs Gilkan's casual fare could not be compared to Mrs Heydrick s inviting amplitude Yet there was Fanny Gilkan erect and flaming haired, who could walk as far as he could himself and carry her father s clumsy gun all the way

His thoughts deflected by Fanny Gilkan, left the immediate present of supper and rested upon the fact that his — his appreciation of her was becoming known at the Furnace while Dan Hesa must be circulating it, with biting comments, among the charcoal burners Dan Hesa although younger than Howat was already contracting for charcoal a forward young German and, Fanny had said with a giggle he was paying her serious attention Howat Penny had lately seen a new moroseness among the charcoal burners that could only have come from the association of the son of Gilbert Penny and the potential owner of Myrtle Forge with the founder

man s daughter Charcoal burners were lawless men, fugitive in character often escaped from terms of indenture Dan Hesa was he knew well liked by them and the hazard created by his attraction to Fanny Gilkan drew Howat Penny irresistibly away from the superior merits of the Heydrick table

That was his character denial as a child had filled him with slow accumulating rage later disci pline at school had found him utterly intractable Something deep and instinctive within him resisted every effort to make him a part of any social organ ization however admirable he never formed any personal bonds with humanity in particular He had grown into a solitary being within whom were immovably locked all the confidences the spontaneous expressions of self that bind men into a solidar ity of common failings and hopes He never offered nor apparently required any marks of sympathy as a fact he rarely expressed anything except an occasional irrepressible scorn lashing out at indi viduals or acts that conspicuously displeased him This had occurred more than once at Myrtle Forge when assemblymen or members of the Provincial Council had been seated at dinner

It was after such a scene that his mother had wit nessed perhaps his only attempt at self-explanation

I am sorry you were disturbed he had pro nounced after standing and regarding her for a silent frowning space but for me there is something unendurable in men herding like cattle pro

tecting their fat with warning boards and fences I can t manage the fiddling li s that keep up the whole silly pretence of the stuffy show If it gets much thicker he had threatened waving vaguely toward the west ' I ll go out to the Ohio or the French forts

That this was not merely a passive but an active state of mind was amply expressed by his resolute movement toward Thomas Gilkan s house He had ordinarily, an unusual liking for the charcoal burn ers and had spent many nights in their huts built like the charring stacks, of mud and branches But organized by Dan Hesa into an opposition a criti cism of his choice of way they offered an epitome of the conditions he derided and assailed

His feeling for Fanny Gilkan was in the greater part understood measured there was a certain amount of inchoate youthful response to her sheer physical well being a vague blur of pleasant sensa tion at her proximity but beyond that he felt no attraction except a careless admiration for her en durance and dexterity in the woods a certain relief in the freedom of her companionship He had never considered her concretely as a possible source of physical pleasure He was not easily excited sex ually and had had few adventures with women something of his contempt his indifference removed him from that too His emotions were deep vital and hid beneath a shyness of habit that had grown into a suspicious reserve All bonds were irksome

to him and *instinctively he avoided the greater with* the lesser instinctively he realized that the admis sion of cloying influences of the entanglements of sex would more definitely bind him than any gen erality of society

It had he thought grown dark with amazing rapidity He could now see a feeble light at the Gilkans *ahead and on the right* At *the same* moment a brighter flickering radiance fell upon the road the thick foliage of the trees The blast was gathering at Shadrach Furnace A clear almost smokeless flame rose from the stack against the night blue sky It illuminated the rectangular stone structure of the coal house on the hill and showed the wet and blackened roof of the casting shed below The flame dwindled and then mounted hanging like a fabulous oriflamme on a stillness in which Howat Penny could hear the blast forced through the Furnace by the great leather bellows

He turned in over the littered ground before the Gilkan house Fanny was standing in the doorway her straight vigorous body sharp against the glow inside Here s Mr Howat Penny she called over her shoulder Is everything off the table? There s not much she turned to him but the end of the pork barrel A meagre fire was burning in the large untidy hearth battered tin ovens had been drawn asid and a pair of wood soled shoes were drying The rough slab of the table pushed back against a long seat made of a partly hewed

and pegged log was empty but for some dull scarred pewter and scraps of salt meat On the narrow stair that led above a small, tousselled form was sleeping — one of the cast boys at the Furnace

A thin peering woman in a hickory-dyed wool dress moved forward obsequiously 'Mr Penny' she echoed the girl s announcement and here I haven t got a thing fit for you Thomas Gilkan has been too busy to get out, and Fanny she ll fetch nothing unless the mood s on her If I only had a fish I could turn over She brushed the end of the table with a frayed sleeve You might just take a seat and I ll look around

Fanny Gilkan listened to her mother with a com prehending smile Fanny s face was gaunt but her grey eyes were wide and compelling her mouth was firm and bright and her hair her father often said resembled the fire at the top of Shadrach Howat knew that she was as impersonal as essentially un stirred as himself but he had a clear doubt of Mrs Gilkan The latter was too anxious to welcome him to their unpretending home she obviously moved to throw Fanny and himself together and to disparage such suits as honest Dan Hesa's He wondered if the older woman thought he might marry her daugh ter And wondering he came to the conclusion that the other thing would please the mother almost as well She had given him to understand that at Fanny s age she would know how to please any Mr Howat Penny that chance fortune might bring her

That some such worldly advice had been poured into Fanny s ears he could not doubt and he ad mired the girl s obvious scorn of such wiles and sur renders She sat frankly beside him now as he finished a wretched supper and asked about the country in regions to which she had not penetrated 'It s a three days trip he finished a recital of an excursion of his own

I d like to go she returned but I suppose I couldn t find it alone

He was considering the possibility of such a jour ney with her — it would be pleasant in the extreme — when her mother interrupted them from the foot of the stair

A sensible girl she declared ' would think about seeing the sights of a city and of a cherry derry dress with ribbons instead of all this about tramping off through the woods with a ragged sl irt about your naked knees

Fanny Gilkan s face darkened and she glanced swiftly at Howat Penny He was filling a pipe un moved Such a trip as he had outlined with Fanny was fastening upon his thoughts It would at once express his entire attitude toward the world opin ion and the resentful charcoal burners

You wouldn t really go he said aloud half consciously

The girl frowned in an effort of concentration gazing into the thin light of the dying fire and two watery tallow dips Her coarsely spun dress col

oured with sassafras bark and darker than the yel low hickory stain drew about her fine shoulders and full plastic breast I d like it ' she repeated but afterward There is father —

She had said father but Howat I enny determined that she was thinking of Dan Hesa Dan was as strong as himself if heavier a personable young man He would make a good husband But that he added was in the future Dan Hesa apparently didn t want to marry Fanny to morrow that week Meanwhile a trip with him to the headwaters of a creek would not injure her in the least His con tempt of a world petty and iron bound in endless pretence fanning his smouldering and sullen resent ment in general flamed out in a determination to take her with him if possible It would conclusively define state his attitude toward men herding like cattle He did not stop to consider what it might define for Fanny Gilkan In the stir of his rebel lious self there was no pause for vicarious approxi mations If he thought of her at all it was in the indirect opinion that she was better without such a noodle as Dan Hesa threatened to become

I d get two ho ses from the Forge he contin ued apparently to his mildly speculative self ' a few things not much would be necessary That gun you carry he addressed Fanny indirectly ' is too heavy I ll et you a lighter bound in brass '

She repeated sombrely leaning with elbows on the table her chin in her hands ' And afterwards —'

"I thought you were free of that" he observed ' it sounds like the town women the barnyard crowd I thought you were an independent person Certainly' he went on coldly 'you can t mistake my attitude I like you, but I am not in the least interested in any way that—that your mother might appreciate I am neither a seducer nor the type that marries

I understand that Howat she assured him and I think I m not sure but I think that what you mean wouldn t bother me either Anyhow it shouldn t spoil the fun of our trip But no one else in the world would believe that simple truth If you could stay there in those splendid woods or a world like them why it would be heaven But you have to come back you have to live on perhaps for a great while in the world of Shadrach and Myrtle Forge I m not sure that I d refuse if you asked me to go, Howat I just don t know if a woman can stand alone, for that s what it would come to afterward against a whole lifeful of misjudgment It might be better in the end for everybody if she continued home made the best of things with the others

You may possibly be right he told her with a sudden resumption of indifference After all it was unimportant whether or not Fanny Gilkan went with him to the source of the stream he had discovered Every one it became more and more evident was alike monotonous He wondered again lounging

back against the wall about the French forts outposts in a vast wilderness There was an increasing friction between the Province and France the legacy of King George s War, but Howat Penny s allegiance to place was as conspicuous by its absence as the other communal traits Beside that beyond Kaskaskia at St Xavier and the North there was little thought of French or English the sheer problem of existence there drowned other considerations He would he thought go out in the spring leave Myrtle Forge with its droning anvil the endless unvaried turning of water wheel and the facile trivial chatter in and about the house David Forsythe back from England in the capacity of master of fluxing metals might acquire his Howat s interest in the Penny iron

Fanny Gilkan said You ll burn a hole in your coat with that pipe He roused himself and she moved across the room and pinched the smoking wicks The embers on the hearth had expired, and the fireplace was a sooty black cavern Fanny at the candles was the only thing clearly visible the thin radiance slid over the turn of her cheek her hovering hand was like a cut paper silhouette It was growing late Thomas Gilkan would soon be back from the Furnace he must go Howat had no will to avoid Gilkan but the thought of the necessary conversational exchange wearied him

The sound of footsteps approached the house from without it was he thought, slightly annoyed,

the founderman but the progress deflected by the door circled to a window at the side A voice called low and urgent Seemy! Seemy!' It was repeated and there was an answering mutter from the stair a thick murmur and a deep sigh

The cast boy slipped crumpled and silent in bare feet across the floor Yes he called back rapidly waking

The voice from without continued They re going to start up the Olev

What is it? Fanny demanded

The raccoon dogs the boy paused at the door A lot of the furnacemen and woodcutters from round about are hunting

Fanny Gilkan leaned across the table to Howat her face glowing with interest. Come ahead she urged *we can do this anyhow I like to hear the* dogs yelping and follow them through the night. You can bring your gun I ll leave mine back and perhaps we ll get something really big"

Howat himself responded thoroughly to such an expedition to the mystery of the primitive woods doubly withdrawn in the dark the calls of the others near or far or completely lost in a silence of stars the still immensity of a land unguessed mythical — endless trees endless mountains endless rivers with their headwaters buried in arctic countries beyond human experience and emptying into the miraculous blue and gilded seas of the tropics

Fanny Gilkan would follow the dogs closely too

with infinite swing and zest She knew the country better than himself better almost than any one else at the Furnace He stirred at her urgency, and she caught his arm, dragging him from behind the table She tied a linsey woolsey jacket by its arms about her waist, and put out the candles Outside the blast was steadily in progress at the stack the clear glow of the flame shifted over the near by walls glinted on the new yellow of more distant foliage fell in sharp or blurred traceries against the surrounding night

They could hear the short impatient yelps of the dogs but before they reached them the hunt was away A lantern flickered far ahead a minute blur vanishing through files of trees Fanny turned to the right mounting an abrupt slope thickly wooded toward the crown A late moon past full, shed an unsteady light through interlaced boughs matted grape vines creepers flung from tree to tree it shone on a hurrying rill a bright thread drawn through the brush Fanny Gilkan jumped lightly from bank to bank She made her way with lithe ease through apparently unbroken tangles It was Fanny who went ahead who waited for Howat to follow across a fallen trunk higher than his waist She even mocked him gaily declared that through his slowness they were hopelessly losing the hunt

However the persistent barking of the dogs contrived to draw them on They easily passed the stragglers left a group gathered about a lantern

and a black bottle They caught up to the body of men but preferred to follow a little outside of the breathless comments and main stumbling progress They stirred great areas of pigeons and countless in different coveys of partridges barely moved to avoid the swiftly falling feet. But no deer crossed near them and the crashing of a heavy animal through the bushes diminished into such a steep gulley that they relinquished thought of pursuit The chase continued for an unusual distance the moon sank into the far unbroken forest the stars brightened through the darkest hour of the night

Fanny Gilkan and Howat proceeded more slowly now but still they went directly without hesitation in the direction they chose They crossed a log felled over a shallow, hurrying creek the course grew steeper more densely wooded Ruscomb Manor Fanny pronounced over her shoulder Since a long way back he agreed Finally a sharper stationary clamour announced that the object of the hunt had been achieved and a raccoon treed They made their way to the dim illumination cast on moving forms and a ring of dogs throwing themselves upward at the trunk of a tree There was a concerted cry for "Ebo and a wizened grey negro in a threadbare drugget coat with a scarlet handkerchief about his throat came forward and kicking aside the dogs commenced the ascent of the smooth trunk that swept up to the obscure foliage above There was a short delay then a violent agi

tation of branches A clawing shape shot to the ground struggled to its feet but the raccoon was instantly smothered in a snarling pyramid of dogs

Howat Penny was overwhelmingly weary He had tramped all day, since before morning while now another dawn was approaching and the hunters were at least ten miles from the Furnace He would have liked to stay sleep where he was but the labour of preparing a proper resting place would be as great as returning to Shadrach Besides Fanny Gilkan was with him with her new cautious regard for the world s opinion They stood silent for a moment under a fleet dejection born of the hour and a cold seeping mist of which he became suddenly conscious The barrel of his gun was wet and instinctively he wiped off the lock. Two men passing brushed heavily against him and stopped Who is it one demanded John Ra jennas? By God it s a long way back to old Shad rach with splintering shoes ' A face drew near Howat and then retreated Oh Mr Penny ' I didn t know you were up on the hunt It was he recognized one of the coaling men who worked for Dan Hesa The other discovered Fanny Gilkan

And Fanny too the voice grew inimical The men drew away and a sharp whispering fluctuated out of the darkness

Come Howat Penny said sharply we must get back or stay out here for the rest of the night I don t mind admitting I d like to be where I could

sleep She moved forward now tacitly taking a place behind him and he led the return tramping doggedly in the shortest direction possible

The hollows and stream beds were filled with the ghostly mist and bitterly chill the night paled slightly diluted with grey there was a distant clamour of crows They entered the Furnace tract by a path at the base of the rise from where they had started On the left at a crossing of roads one leading to Myrtle Forge the other a track for the charcoal sleds a blacksmith s open shed held a faint smoulder on the hearth The blast from Shad rach Furnace rose perpendicular in the still air

Fanny Gilkan slipped away with a murmur Howat abandoned all thought of returning to Myr tle Forge that night But it was he corrected the conclusion morning The light was palpable he could see individual trees the bulk of the cast house built directly against the Furnace in the illusive radiance the coal house on the hill seemed poised on top of the other structures A lantern made a red dish blur in the cast house it was warm in there when a blast was in progress and he determined to sleep at once

Thomas Gilkan with a fitful light was testing the sealing clay on the face of the Furnace hearth two men were rolling out the sand for the cast over the floor of the single high interior and another was hammering on a wood form used for stamping the pig moulds The interior was soothing the lights

blurred voices the hammering seemed to retreat, to mingle with the subdued smooth clatter of the turning wheel without the rhythmic collapse of the bellows Howat Penny was losing consciousness when an apparently endless stuttering blast arose close by He cursed splenetically It was the horn calling the Furnace hands for the day and he knew that it would continue for five minutes

Others had entered a little group gathered about Thomas Gilkan s waning lantern Far above them a window glimmered against the sooty wall Howat saw that Dan Hesa was talking to Gilkan driving in his words by a fist smiting a broad, hard palm The group shifted and the countenance of the man who had recognized Howat Penny in the woods swam into the pale radiance His lassitude swiftly deserted him receding before the instant resentment always lying at the back of his sullen intolerance — they were discussing him mouthing some foul imputation about the past night Hesa left the cast house abruptly followed by the charcoal burner and Howat rose the length of his rifle thrust forward under his arm and walked deliberately forward

The daylight was increasing rapidly and as he approached Thomas Gilkan extinguished the flame of the lantern He was a small man with a face parched by the heat of the furnace and a narrowed reddened vision without eyebrows or lashes He was Howat had heard an unexcelled founder a position of the greatest importance to the quality of metal

run There was a perceptible consciousness of this in the manner in which Gilkan moved forward to meet Gilbert Penny s son

I don t want to give offence the founderman said but *Mr Penny sir — he stopped* commenced again without the involuntary mark of respect Mr Penny stay away from my house There is more that I could say but I won t That is all — keep out of my place No names please

Howat Penny s resentment swelled in a fiery anger at the stupidity that had driven Thomas Gilkan into making his request A sense of humiliation contributed to an actual fury the bitterer for the reason that he could make no satisfactory reply Gilkan was a freedman while he was occupying a dwelling at Shadrach Furnace it was his to conduct as he liked Howat s face darkened — the meagre *fool! He would see that there was another head* founder here within a week

But there were many positions in the Province for a man of Gilkan s ability there were few workmen of his sensitive skill with the charge and blast Not only Howat s father but Abner Forsythe as well would search to the end all cause for the founderman s leaving And, in consequence of that any detestable misunderstanding must increase He determined with an effort unaccustomed and arduous, to ignore the other after all Gilkan was but an insignificant mouthpiece for the familiar ineptitude of the world at large Thomas Gilkan might continue

at the Furnace without interference from him Fanny marry her stupid labourer Howat had seen symptoms of that last night He would no longer complicate her existence with avenues of escape from a monotony which she patently elected

'Very well Gilkan he agreed shortly choking on his wrath He turned and tramped shortly from the interior A sudden lengthening sunlight bathed the open and a sullen group of charcoal burners about Dan Hess Their faces seemed ebonized by the grinding in of particles of blackened wood Some women, even in gay primitive clothes stood back of the men As Howat passed, a low hostile murmur rose He halted and met them with a dark contemptuous countenance and the murmur died in a shuffling of feet in the dry grass He turned again and walked slowly away when a broken piece of rough casting hurtled by his head In an overpowering rage he whirled about throwing his rifle to his shoulder A man detached from the group was lowering his arm and holding the sights hard on the other s metal buttoned twill jacket Howat pulled the trigger There was only an answering dull ineffectual click

The rifle slid to the ground and Howat stared fascinated at the man he had attempted to kill The charcoal burners were stationary before the momentary abandon of Howat Penny s temper 'Right at me the man articulated who had been so nearly shot into oblivion —saw the hammer

fall' A tremendous desire to escape possessed Howat a violent chill overtook him his knees threatened the loss of all power to hold him up He stepped backward his gun stock trailing over the inequalities of the ground then he swung about and in an unbroken silence stumbled away

He was not running from anything the charcoal burner might say do but from a terrifying spec tacle of himself from the vision of a body shot through the breast huddled in the sere underbrush He was aghast at the unsuspected possibility re vealed as it were out of a profound dark by the searing flash of his anger cold at the thought of such absolute self betrayal Howat saw in fancy the bald triumph of a society to which his act con summated would have delivered him a society that as his peer would have judged condemned him Hundreds of faces — faces mean insignificant or pock marked — merged into one huge dominant countenance hundreds of bodies unwashed or foul with disease or meticulously clean joined in one body clothed in the black robe of delegated author ity and loomed above him gigantic and absurd and powerful and brought him to death Deeper than his horror than any fear of physical consequences lay the instinctive shrinking from the obliteration of his individual being the loss of personal freedom

II

HE was possessed by an unaccustomed desire to be at Myrtle Forge usually it was the contrary case and he was escaping from the complicated civilisation of his home but now the well ordered house the serenity of his room appeared astonishingly inviting Howat progressed rapidly past the smithy and turned to the right about the Furnace dam a placid and irregular reach of water holding the reflection of the trees on a mirror still dulled by a vanishing trace of mist above which the leaves hung in the motionless air in the aureate wash of the early sun as if they had been pressed from gold foil Beyond the dam the path — he had left the road that connected Forge and Furnace for a more direct way — followed the broad rippling course of the Canary the stream that supplied the life of Myrtle Forge He automatically avoided the breaks in the rough trail his mind a dark and confused chamber still lighted by appalling flashes of memory A thing as slight as incalculable as a loose flint had been all that prevented He wondered if Fanny and Thomas Gilkan were right in their shared conviction Fanny half persuaded but the elder with a finality stamped with an accent of the heroic Whether or not they were right

didn t concern him he decided his only problem was to keep outside all such entanglements And at present he wanted to sleep

The path left the creek and joined the road that swept about the face of the dwelling at Myrtle Forge The lawn squarely raised from the public way by a low brick terrace showed the length of hou e behind the dipping horizontal branches the beginning pale gold, of a widespread beech It was a long structure of but two stories built solidly out of a dark flinty stone with an indefinite pinkish glow against the lush sod and sombre flat greenery of a young English ivy about a narrow stiff portico

Howat crossed the lawn above the house where a low wing holding the kitchen and pantries ex tended at right angles from the dwelling s length A shed with a flagging of broad stones lay inside the angle where a robust girl with an ozenbrigs skirt caught up on bare legs and feet thrust into wooden clogs was scrubbing a steaming line of iron pots He quickly entered the centre hall from a rear door and mounted as he hoped without interruption to his room That interior was singularly restful pleasant after the confused and dishevelling nig t

The sanded floor patterned with a broom held no carpet nor were the walls covered but white and bare save for a number of small framed engravings — a view of Boston Harbour Queene Anne s Tomb and some black line satirical portrait prints A stone fireplace ready for lighting had iron dogs and

fender, and a screen lacquered in flowery wreaths on a slender black stem At one side stood a hinge bound chest its oak panels glassy with age on the other an English set of drawers held a mirror stand and scattered trifles — razors and gold sleeve but tons a Barcelona handkerchief candlesticks and flint a twist of common pig tail tobacco while from a drawer knob hung a banian of bright orange Chinese silk with a dark blue cord

By the side of his curled black walnut bed with out drapery and set like a French couch low on three pairs of spiral legs was a deep cushioned chair into which he sank and dragged off his sodden buck-skin breeches The room wavered and blurred in his weary vision — squat rush bottomed Dutch chairs seemed to revolve about a table with apparently a hundred legs a bearskin floated across the floor He secured the banian and swathing himself in its cool sibilant folds he fell his face hid in an angle of his arm into an immediate profound slumber

The shadows of late afternoon were once more gathering when he woke He lay with hands clasped behind his head watching a roseate glow dis perse from the room From without came the faint, clear voice of Marta Appletofft across the road at the farm calling the chickens and he could hear the querulous whistling of the partridges that invari ably deserted the fringes of forest to join the do mesticated flocks at feed time A sense of well b ing flooded him the project of St Xavier the French

forts, drew far away never before had he found Myrtle Forge so desirable He was he thought growing definitely older He was twenty five

A light knock fell on his door and he answered comfortably thinking that it was his mother But it was Caroline his oldest sister How you have slept she observed, closing the door at her back it was hardly nine when you came in and here it is five Mother heard you Caroline Penny was a warm unbeautiful girl with a fine slender body two years younger than himself Her colouring was far lighter than Howat s she had sympathetic hazel eyes an inviting mouth an illusive depression in one cheek that alone saved her from positive ugliness and tobacco brown hair worn low with a long turned strand She had on a pewter coloured informal wrap over a black silk petticoat lacking hoops with a cut border of violet and silver brocade and above low green kid stays with coral tulip blossoms worked on the dark velvet of foliage were glimpses of webby linen and frank young flesh

She came to the edge of the bed where she sat with a yellow morocco slipper swinging from a silk clocked narrow foot He liked Caroline Howat lazily thought Although she did not in the least resemble their mother in appearance — she could not pretend to such distinction of being — Caroline un mistakably possessed something of the other s per sonality far more than did Myrtle She said gen erally patently only delaying for the moment com

munications of much greater interest than himself, Where were you last night?' He told her and she plunged at once into a rich store of information

Did you know that Mr and Mrs Winscombe are staying on? It s so because of the fever in the city David and his father stopped all night too, and only left after breakfast He's insane about London but I could see that he s glad to get back to the Province Mr Forsythe is very abrupt, but ridiculously proud of him —'

These Winscombes' Howat interrupted, 'what about them? The Forsythes are a common occurrence'

David s been gone more than three years' she replied And you should hear him talk he s got a coat with wired tails in his box he s dying to wear, but is afraid of his father Oh the Winscombes! Well, he s rather sweet sixty or sixty five years old very straight up the back and wears the loveliest wigs His servant fixes them on a stand — he turns the curls about little rolls of clay, ties them with paper, and then bakes it in the oven like a pudding The servant is an Italian with a long duck s bill of a nose and quick little black eyes He makes our negro women giggle like anything It s evident he is fearfully impertinent And, what do you think? — he hooks Mrs Winscombe into her stays! Mother says that that isn t anything really Mrs Winscombe is a lady of the court and the most extraordinary happenings go on there You see

mother knows a lot about her family and it s very good she s part Polish and part English and her name s Ludowika She s ages younger than her husband

'Myrtle doesn t like her — she stopped midway in her torrent of information I came in to talk to you about Myrtle' she went on in a different voice that is partly about Myrtle but more of myself and of —'

How long are the others going to stay? he cut in heedlessly

'I don t know she again repressed her own desire ' perhaps they will have to go back to Annapolis — don t ask me why — but they hope to sail from Philadelphia in a week or so She has marvellous clothes and I asked her if she would send me some babies from London You know what they are Howat — little wooden dolls to show off the fashion but she made a harrowing joke right in front of father and Mrs Forsythe The things she says are just beyond description it seems that it s *all right to talk anyway now if you call it classic* And she has fans with pictures and rhymes on honestly — words apparently failed her

Howat laughed Little Innocence he said He fell silent thinking of their mother The court he knew had been her right too by birth and he wondered if with the reminder of Mrs Winscombe and her reflections of St James she regretted her marriage and removal to the Province She was

essentially lady, while Gilbert Penny had been the son of a small country squire He had seen a profile of his father as a young man at the time he had first met Isabel Kingsfrere Howat It was a handsome profile perhaps a shade heavy, but admirably balanced and stamped with decisive power He had characteristically invested almost his last shilling in a tract of eight hundred acres in Pennsylvania and the passage of himself and his bride to the Province

It was natural for men so to adventure but Howat thought of Isabel Penny with, perhaps the only marked admiration he felt for any being There had been a period short but strenuous of material difficulties in which the girl — she had been hardly a woman in years — entirely unprepared for such a different activity had been finely competent and courageous This had not endured long because Gilbert Penny had been successful almost from the first day of his landing in a new world Chance letters had enlisted the confidence of David Forsythe a Quaker merchant of property and increasing importance the latter became a part owner of an iron furnace situated not far from the Penny holding he assisted Gilbert in the erection of a forge and in less than twenty years Gilbert Penny had grown to be a half proprietor in the Furnace with —

Howat Caroline broke in on his thoughts sharply I came in as I said to talk about something very important to me and I intend to do it'

Even after that decided announcement she hesitated a deeper colour stained her clear cheeks You mustn t laugh at me, she warned him or think I m horrid I can talk to you like this because you seem a — a little outside of things as if you were looking on at a rather poorly done play and you are entirely honest yourself

He nodded condescendingly his interest at last *retrieved from the co templation of his mother* as a young woman

It s about David Caroline stated almost de fiantly Howat I think I m very fond of David No you mustn t interrupt me When he went away I liked him a lot but now that he is back and quite grown up it s more than liking Howat His father brought him out here right away he re turned and for a special reason He was very direct about it he wants David to marry — Myrtle I heard father — yes I listened — and him talking it over and our old darling was pleased to death It s natural Mr Forsythe is one of the most influential *men in the city and father adores Myrtle more than* anything else in the world She paused and he studied her in a growing wonder suddenly she seemed older her mouth was drawn in a hard line a new Caroline You know Myrtle she added

He did and considered the youngest Penny with a new objectivity Myrtle was an extremely pretty even a beautiful girl You know Myrtle she repeated and why father is so blind is more than

I can understand She doesn t care a ribbon for truth she never thinks of anything but her own comfort and clothes and — and she d make David miserable Myrtle simply can t fancy anybody but herself That s very different from me Howat or yourself You would be a burning lover' He laughed incredulously And I well I know what I feel

It s practically made up for David to marry Myrtle that is to urge it all that s possible and she will never care for him while all he thinks of now is how good looking she is I want David terri bly she said sitting erect with shut hands and I will be expected to step aside to keep out of the way while Myrtle poses at him Oh I know all about it I see her rehearsing before the glass Or I will be expected to act as a contrast a plain back ground for Myrtle s beauty

You see there is no one I can talk to but your self Even mother wouldn t understand com pletely and she couldn t be honest about Myrtle The best of mothers after all are women and Howat there is always a curious formality between women a little stiffness'

Well he demanded 'what do you want me to say or what did you think I might do?

'I don t know she admitted her eyes bright with unshed tears I suppose I just wanted a little support or even some encouragement I don't propose to let Myrtle walk off with David and not

turn my hand Of course I am not a beauty but then I m not a ninny either And I have a prettier figure that is it will still be pretty in ten or fifteen years Myrtle s soft'

Good heavens he exclaimed half serious "what Indians you all are!"

I m quite shameless she admitted and this is really what I thought — you can perhaps help me sometimes I don t know how but he will be out here a lot men talk together —

' And I can tell him that Myrtle is an utterly untrustworthy person who would make him ultimately miserable I ll remind him that her beauty is no deeper than he sees it But that Caroline there admirable girl seething with affection in a figure warranted against time or accident — her expression brought his banter to an end He studied her seriously revolved what she had said She was right about Myrtle who was undoubtedly a vain and silly little fish His father s immoderate admiration for her had puzzled him as well as the elder sister He remembered that never had he heard their mother express a direct opinion of Myrtle but neither had Isabel Penny shown the slightest question of her husband s high regard for their youngest child She was he realized with a warming of his admiration beautifully cultivated in the wisdom of the world

Caroline was vastly preferable to Myrtl he felt that instinctively and he was inclined to give her

whatever assistance he could But this would be negligible and he said so "You will have to do the trick by yourself," he advised her "I wouldn't pretend to tell you how As you said you're not a ninny And Myrtle's none too clever although she will manage to seem so It's wonderful how she'll pick up a hint or two and make a show You see — she will be talking iron to David as if she had been raised in a furnace

"Men are so senseless!" Caroline exclaimed viciously She rose "It's been a help only to talk to you Howat I knew you'd understand Supper will be along soon Make yourself into a charmer for Mrs Winscombe I'm certain she thinks the men out here are frightful hobs" The light had dimmed rapidly in the room and he moved over to the chest of drawers where he lit the candles setting over them their tall carved glass cylinders

III

HE dressed slowly all that Caroline had said and he thought tangling and disentangling deliberately in his mind Mrs Winscombe thinking there were no presentable men in the Provinces His hand strayed in the direction of a quince coloured satin coat but he chose instead a commonplace dun affair with pewter buttons and carelessly settled his shoulders in an unremarkable waistcoat Then although he could hear a concerted stir of voices below that announced impending supper he slipped into a chair for half a pipe He was indifferent not diffident and there was no hesitation in the manner in which he finally approached the company seated at supper His place was as usual at his mother s side but opposite him where Myrtle usually sat was a rigid high shouldered man in mulberry and silver jewelled buckles and a full powdered wig He had thin dark cheeks a heavy nose above a firm mouth with a satirical droop and small unpleasantly penetrating eyes An expression of general malice was however corrected by a high and serene brow

Mr Winscombe Howat Penny s mother said my son ' The former bowed with formal civility

but gave a baffling effect of mockery which Howat discovered enveloped practically every movement and speech He was he said enchanted to meet Mr Penny and that extravagant expression delivered in a slightly harsh negligent voice heightened the impression of a personality strong and cold a being as obdurate as an iron bar masquerading in coloured satin and formulating pretty phrases like the sheen on the surface of a deep November pool Gilbert Penny echoed the introduction at the other end of the table

Howat saw in the yellow candlelight a woman not he decided any better looking than Caroline in an extremely low cut gown of scarlet with a rigid girdle of saffron brocade a fluted tulle ruff tied with a scarlet string about a long slim neck and a cap of sheer cambric with a knot of black ribbons Her eyes were widely opened and dark her nose short and her mouth full and petulant She too was conventionally adequate but her in sincerity was clearer than her husband s it was pro nounced quickly in an impertinent and musical voice without the slightest pretence of the injection of any interest Howat Penny felt in a manner which he was unable to place that she vaguely re sembled himself perhaps it lay in her eyebrows slanting slightly toward the temples but it was vaguer more elusive than that

He considered it idly through the course of sup per At intervals he heard her voice a little, high

pitched laugh with a curious underlying flatness not of tone her modulations were delicate and exact but deeper Again he was dimly conscious of an aspect of her which eluded every effort to fix and define He could not even comprehend his dwelling upon the immaterial traits of a strange and in different woman he was at a loss to understand how such inquiries assailed him He grew finally annoyed and shut his mind to any further con sideration of her

Mrs Penny was talking with charming earnest ness to the man on her other hand The amber radiance flickered over the beautiful curves of her shoulders and cast a warm shadow at the base of her throat She smiled at her son and her face in spite of its present gaiety held a definite reminder of her years almost fifty but when she turned again her profile with slightly tilted nose and delightfully fresh lips and chin was that of a girl no older than Caroline Howat had often noticed this It was amazing — with that slight movement she would seem to lose at once all the years that had accumu lated since she was newly married In a second she would appear to leave them all her mature children the heavy palpably aging presence of Gilbert Penny the house and obligations that had grown about her and be remotely young a stranger to the irrefutable proof that her youth had gone At such moments he was almost reluctant to claim her attention to bring her again as it were into the present with so

much spent lapsed at times he almost thought in that connection wasted

She had in adition to her profile a spirit of youth that had remained undimmed as if there were within her a reserve warmth a priceless gift which life had never claimed and it was the contemplation of that which gave Howat the impression that Isabel Penny s life had not fully flowered He had never known her to express a regret of the way she had taken he had never even surprised her in a perceptible retrospective dejection but the conviction remained Gilbert Penny had been an almost faultless husband tender and firm and successful but his wife had come from other blood and necessities than domestic felicities she had been a part of a super cultivation a world of such niceties as the flawless courtesy of Mr Winscombe discussing with her the unhappy passion of the Princess Caroline for Lord Hervey

Howat Penny thought sombrely of love of the emotion that had brought — or betrayed? — Isabel Howat so far away f om her birthright It had gripped his sister no less tyrannically stripping them he considered of their essential liberty The thing was clear enough in his mind — nothing more than an animal instinct humminating to the human individual to breed It was the mere repetition of nature through the working of an automatic law No such obscure fate he determined should overtake obliterate him Yet it had involved his mother a

person of the first superiority A slight chill as if a breath of imminent winter had touched him communicated itself to his heart

A trivial conversation was in progress across the table between Mrs Winscombe and Myrtle The latter was an embodiment of the familiar Saxon type of beauty her hair was fair infinitely pale gold her complexion a delicately mingled crimson and white her eyes as candidly blue as flowers Her features were finely moulded and her shoulders slipping out from azure lutestring were like smooth handfuls of meringue Her voice was always formal and it sounded stilted forced in comparison with Mrs Winscombe s easy periods

The supper ended and the company trailed into a drawing room at the opposite end of the house from the kitchen wing Howat delayed and Caroline urged forward by Mr Winscombe s sardonically ubiquitous bow half lingered to cast back a glance of private understanding at her brother When he decided reluctantly to follow he was kept back by the sound of a familiar explanation in his father s decisive full tones

Howat he pronounced obviously addressing the *elder Winscombe* is a black Penny That is what we call them in our family You see the Pennys some hundreds of years back acquired a strong Welsh strain I take it you are familiar with the Welsh — a solitary living dark lot Unamenable to influence reflect their country I suppose but

lovers of music I have a touch of that Now any one would think that such a blood so long ago would have spread out been diluted in a thick English stock like the Pennys or at least that we would all have had a little here and there But nothing of the sort it sinks entirely out of sight for two or three and sometimes four generations and then appears solid in one individual as unslacked as the pure original thing The last one was burned as a heretic in Mary s day although I believe he would have equally stayed Catholic if the affair had been the other way around Opposition s their breath This boy —

You must not figure to yourself Mr Winscombe Mrs Penny s even voice admirably cut in, that the black is a word of reproach I think we are both at times at a loss with Howat he is so different from us from the girls but he is truly remarkable I have an unusual affection for him really his honesty is extraordinary

He ought he knew either follow the others into the drawing room or move farther away His father s explanation repelled him but his mother s capital defence — it amounted to that — made it evident to him that he should by his presence give her what support he could

At the fireplace Gilbert Penny was lost in conversational depths with Mr Winscombe About the opening now closed for the introduction of a hearth stove were tiles picturing in gay glazes the pastoral

history of Ruth and above the mantel a long clear mirror held a similitude of brilliant colour — the scarlet of Mrs Winscombe s gown Myrtle s azure lutestring on a petticoat of ruffled citron spreading over her hoops and little white kid slippers with gilt heels Caroline s flowered Chinese silk The room was large and square with a Turkey floor carpet and walls hung with paper printed in lavender and black perspectives from copper plates A great many candles had been lighted on tables and mantel and in lacquer stands One of the latter at Mrs Winscombe s side showed her features clearly

Howat Penny saw that while she was actually no prettier than Caroline she was infinitely more vivid and compelling Her face held an extraordinary potency her bare arms and shoulders were more insistent than his sister s there was about her a consciousness of the allurement of body frankness in its employment She made no effort to mask her feeling which at present was one of complete indifference to her surroundings and not talking a shadow had settled on her vision Caroline was seated on a little sofa across from the fireplace and she moved her voluminous skirt aside made a place for him

Almost nothing of Annapolis Mrs Winscombe replied to a query of what she had seen in Maryland We were there hardly two weeks and I hadn t recovered from the trip across the sea When I think of returning God knows I d almost stay here You

wouldn t suppose one person could vent so much I believe Felix went to a Jockey Club there were balls and farces but I kept in bed Mrs Penny asked And London — how are you amused there now?" The other retied the bow of a garter ' Fireworks Roman candles to Mr Handel s music and Italian parties Villeggiatura Covent Garden with paper lanterns among the trees seductions —

Gilbert Penny smote his hands on the chair arms This hectoring of our commerce will have to rest somewhere! he declared taking the duty from pig iron and then restricting its market to London is no conspicuous improvement It is those enact ments that provide our currency with Spanish pieces instead of English pounds The West Indies are too convenient to be overlooked ' Mr Winscombe re plied stiffly The Government is prepared to meet infractions of its law Mr Penny muttered a period about Germany in England with a more dis tant echo of Hanoverian whores and deformed fire brands His guest sat with a harsh implacable countenance framed in the long shadows of his elaborate wig his ornate coat tails falling stiffly on either side of his chair

Howat bred in the comparative simplicity of the Province found the *foppery of the aging man* slightly ridiculous yet he was aware that Mr Wins combe s essential character had no expression in his satin and powder his will was as rugged and virile as that of any adventuring frontiersman clad in un

tanned hides He was Howat decided at little dis advantage with his young wife He wondered if any deep bond bound the two Their personal feelings were carefully concealed and in this they resembled Isabel Howat rather than Gilbert her husband The latter had a habit of expressing publicly his affectionate domestic relations And Howat Penny decided that he vastly preferred the others reserve

An awkward silence had developed on top of the brief political acerbities There was no sound but the singing of the wood in the open stove Myrtle had an absent speculative gaze Caroline was biting her lip Mrs Winscombe yawned in the face of the assembly Gilbert Penny suggested cards but there was no reply Howat left the room by a door that opened on a rock threshold set in the lawn The night was immaculate still and cold with stars brightening in the advance of winter He walked about the house The counting room of the forge was a separate stone structure back of the kitchen and to the right and farther away was a second small building The ground fell rapidly down to the Forge on the water power below He could barely discern the towering bulk of the water wheel and roofs of the sheds

He felt uneasy obscurely and emotionally dis turbed Already Fanny Gilkan seemed far away to have dropped out of his life He would give some gold to the charcoal burner he had attempted to shoot Mrs Winscombe annoyed him by her atti

tude toward Myrtle Forge, her unvarnished air of condescension How old was she? A few years more tha.. himself he decid d The Italian hooked her into her stays A picture of this formed in his thoughts and dissolved leaving behind a faint sting ing of his nerves He recalled her bare — naked — arms the old man her husband

She had spoken of Italian parties he had seen a picture on a fan labelled Villeggiatura — a simper ing exquisite in a lascivious embrace with a frail beauty on the bank of a stream and a garland of stripped loves reeling about a slim, diapered Har lequin It was a different scene a different world from the Province and its intrusion in the person of Mrs Winscombe was like an orris scented air moving across the face of great trees sweeping their virginal foliage into the region of strong and pure winds

He was dimly conscious of the awakening in him of undivined pressures the stirring of attenuated yet persisting influences He was saturated in the space the sheer immense simplicity of the wild hardly touched by the narrow strip of inhabited coast He had given his existence to the woods to hunting cun ning beasts the stoical endurance of blinding fa tigue he had scorned the to him sophistications of bricks and civilization But now in the length of an evening something invidious and far different had become sentient in his being Italian parties and Covent Garden with lanterns among the trees

Trees clipped and pruned and gravel walks seduc tions

A falling meteor flashed a brilliant arc across the black horizon dropping into what illimitable wilder ness? Fireworks set to the shrill scraping of violins One mingled with the other in his blood fretting him spoiling the serene and sure vigour of youth bind ing his feet to the obscure past Yet colouring all was the other, the black Welsh blood of the Pennys Ever since his boyhood he had heard the fact of his peculiar inheritance explained accepted In the past he had been what he was without thought self appraisal But now he recognized an essential difference from his family it came over him in a feeling of loneliness, of removal from the facile busi ness of living in general

For the first time he wondered about his future It was unguarded by the placid and safe engage ments of the majority of lives He would he knew untimately possess Myrtle Forge a part of Shad rach and a considerable fortune That was his obvious inheritance But suddenly the material thing the actual grew immaterial and the visionary assumed a dark and enigmatic reality

Howat abruptly quitted the night of the lawn his sombre questioning for the house The candles had been extinguished in the drawing room A square glass lamp hung at the foot of the stairs and there he encountered a man in a scratch wig with a long

nose flattened at the end He bowed obsequiously — a posturing figure in shir sleeves with a green cloth waistcoat and black legs The Italian servant Howat concluded He passed noiselessly leaving a reek of pomatum and the memory of a servile smile Howat Penny experienced a strong sense of distaste almost depression at the other s silent proximity It followed him to his room contaminated his sleep with unintelligible whispering oily and disturbing gestures and fled only at the widening glimmer of dawn

IV

THE sun had almost reached the zenith before Mrs Winscombe appeared from her room And at the same moment David Forsythe arrived on a spent grey mare He had come over the forty rough miles which separated Myrtle Forge from the city in less than five hours He was a year older than Howat but he appeared actually younger — a candid youth with high colour and light simply tied hair He had he told Howat important messages from his father to Mr Winscombe The latter and Gilbert Penny were conversing amicably in the lower room at the right of the stairway — a chamber with a bed that nevertheless was used for informal assemblage Mr Winscombe wore an enveloping banian of russet brocade with deep furred cuffs and a turban of vermilion silk comfortably replacing a wigged formality Under that brilliant colour his face was as yellow as an orange

The written messages were delivered and David returned to the lawn The day was superb — a crystal cold through which the sun s rays filtered with a faintly perceptible glow Caroline was standing at Howat s side and she gave his hand a rapid pressure as David Forsythe approached Where s

Myrtle? the latter asked apparently negligently Howat replied ' Still in the agony of fixing her hair — for dinner she ll be at it again before supper David whistled a vague tune Caroline added You ve got fearfully dressy yourself since London He replied appropriately and then became more serious 'I wish he told them ' that we belonged to the church of England you know the Penns have gone back It s pretty heavy at home after — after some other things The Quakers didn t use to be so infernally solemn You should see the swells about the Court the greatest fun And old George with a face like a plum —

Don t you find anything here that pleases you?' Caroline demanded with asperity

Myrtle s all right he admitted not many of them are as pretty

I ll tell her you ve come Caroline promptly volunteered she won t keep you waiting There she is! No it s Mrs Winscombe

She was swathed in a ruffled lilac cloak quilted with a dull gold embroidery satin slippers were buckled into high pattens of black polished wood and her head relatively small with tight-drawn hair was uncovered She was not as compelling under the sun as in candle light he observed Her face unpainted was pale an expression of petulance discernible Yet she was more potent than any other woman he had encountered Isn t that the garden?' she asked waving beyond the end of

the house ' I like gardens She moved off in the direction indicated and — as he felt she expected demanded — he followed slightly behind

A short steep terrace descended to a formally planted plot now flowerless, enclosed by low privet hedges There were walks of rolled bark and against a lower denser barrier a long white bench The ground still fell away beyond and there was a sturdy orchard cleared of underbrush with crimson apples among the grey limbs Beyond across a low tangled wild an amphitheatre of hills rose against the sky drawn from the extreme right about the façade of the dwelling They seemed to enclose Myrtle Forge in a natural domain of its own and actually Gilbert Penny owned most of the acreage within that immediate circle

Mrs Winscombe sank on the garden bench where she sat with a hand resting on either side of her Above them a column of smoke rose from the kitchen against the blue A second heavier cloud rolled up from the Forge below They have been repairing the forebay Howat explained the Forge has been closed I m supposed to be in the counting house

You work? she demanded surprised

At the ledger put things down — what the men are paid mostly in tobacco and shoes ozenbrigs and molasses and rum or garters and handkerchiefs for the women Then I enter the pig hauled from Shadrach and the carriage of the blooms

I don t understand any of that she announced

It probably wouldn t interest you the pig s the ron cast at the furnace It s worked in the forges, and hammered into blooms and ancomes chunks or stout bars of wrought iron We do better than two tons a week The sound of a short jarring blow rose from the Forge it was repeated became a con tinuous part of the serene noon 'That s the ham mer now he explained It goes usually all day and most nights We re used to it don t hear it but strangers complain

Mr Forsythe said your father was an Iron master one of the biggest in the Province and I suppose you ll become that too She gazed about at the hill sheeted in scarlet and yellow at the wide sunny hollow that held Myrtle Forge Here she added in a totally unexpected accent of feeling it is very beautiful very big I thought all the world was like St James or Versailles I ve never been to Poland my mother's family came from there to Paris but I m told they have forests and such things too This is different from Annapolis that is only an echo of London but here — she gazed far beyond him into the profound noon

He recovered slowly from the surprise of her un looked for speech attitude Howat studied her frankly leaning forward with his elbows on his knees Her discontent was paramount It was deeper than he had supposed like his there were disturbing quali ties in her blood qualities at a variance with the

obvious part of her being A sense of profound in timacy with her pervaded him

This she continued is like a cure at a Bath a great bath of air and light I should like to stay I think Are you content?'

It always seemed crowded to me he admitted 'Usually I get as far away as possible into the woods, the real wilderness But you heard my father last night — I m a black Penny a solitary dark lot You couldn t judge from what I might feel

Your father and you are not sympathetic she judged acutely He is practical solid but it isn t easy to say even with an explanation what you are In London — but I m sick of London Myrtle Forge It s appalling at night I d like to go into the real wilderness leave off my hoops and stays and bathe in a stream a water nymph and you but that s only Watteau again with a cicisbeo hold ing my shift and stockings In London you d be that a lady s servant of love but in the Province, I wonder?

He sat half comprehending her words mingling in his brain with the pounding of the trip hammer at the Forge one familiar and one unfamiliar yet not strange sound Above them on the lawn he could see Myrtle — through the middle of the day the sun had increased its warmth — with skirts like the petals of a fabulous tea rose The sun glinted on

the living gold of her hair and bathed an arm white as snow David was there no doubt His thoughts dwelt for a moment on Caroline then returned to Mrs Winscombe to himself His entire attitude toward her his observations had been upset *disarmed by her unexpected air of soft melancholy* In her lavender wrap she resembled a drooping branch of flowering lilac She seemed very young her air of sophistication her sensuality of being had vanished Traces of her illness on shipboard still lingered darkly under her eyes Asleep he suddenly thought her face would be very innocent, purified This came to him involuntarily there was none of the stinging of the senses she had evoked in him the night before His instinct for preservation from any entanglements with life lay dormant before her *surrender to influences that left her crumpled without* the slightest interest in any exterior fact

A sententious black servant in maroon livery and a bright worsted waistcoat announced dinner from the foot of the terrace and they moved slowly toward the house There was a concerted interest in the faces they found already about the table Howat took his seat at his mother s side Gilbert Penny assisted Mrs Winscombe David was placed between Caroline and Myrtle Mr Winscombe again formally wigged and coated was absorbed in thought He said to his hostess It s the uncertainty that puts me in doubt Ogle thought the thing thoroughly reviewed when now Hamilton comes out with his

damned Indians and Maryland rum Forsythe suggests my presence in Council to morrow and it s barely possible that there will be a return to Annapolis While Ludowika —

'I can t travel another ell over the atrocities they call roads here Mrs Winscombe declared I expect to die returning to England as it is and I won t put up with any more preliminary torment You ll have to leave me

' At Myrtle Forge Gilbert Penny added at once 'at Myrtle Forge as long as you like Unless' he added with a smile you prefer the gaiety at Abner Forsythe s A hot colour suffused David s cheeks

Mr Winscombe bowed over the table I am inclined to take advantage of that Ludowika would be the better without even Quaker gaiety for a little He stopped turned toward her I d like it immensely she replied simply I am sure it would give me back all that I ve lost in passage Perhaps she leaned forward smiling at Howat I could see something of what s behind those hills go into the real Arcadia'

' Out there said Mr Penny are the Endless Mountains

The faint involuntary chill again invaded Howat suddenly an unfamiliar imagery attached to the commonplace phrase uttered by his father — the Endless Mountains' It brought back his doubt his questioning of life It was the inconceivable term

endless, without any finality of ultimate rest without even the arbitrary peace of death that appalled him He thought of life going on and on, with nothing consummated nothing achieved nor final He thought of the black Penny who had been burned as a heretic to ashes years before yet Howat was conscious of the martyr s bitter stubbornness of soul, alive, still alive and unquenched in himself He wondered about the heritage to come There was a further belief that it followed exclusively the male line The Pennys like many another comparatively obscure name went far back into the primeval soil of civilization If he had no issue the endlessness might be confounded a fatality in his long dangerous excursions would have vanquished the ineradicable Welsh blood He might have no children yesterday he would have made such a decision but now he was less sure of himself, of his power to will He was dimly conscious of vast exterior forces and traitorous factors within It was as if momentarily he had been lifted to a cloud beyond time from which he saw the entire stumbling progress of humanity its beginning hid in humid mist moving into a nocturnal shadow like a thunder bank

He sat with chin on breast and sombre eyes until his mother laid her hand on his shoulder "Howat she protested "you are too glum for the comfort of any one near you I think you must make a pose of being black I d almost called one of the servants to fiddle in your ear"

Howat smiled at her he returned slowly to the actual the particular Mr Winscombe had pushed back his chair excusing himself in the pressure of necessary preparations His wife disappeared with him leaving behind the echo of a discussion about Cecco the Italian servant The women followed with David at Myrtle s shoulder leaving Howat and Gilbert Penny

The latter was still a handsome man with his own hair silvered on a ruddy countenance and a careful taste in clothes His nose was predominant with a wide cleft mouth above a square chin

I had thought he said deliberately that you were employed in the counting house but Schwar tells me that it has been a week since you were seen there He raised a broad hand to silence Howat s reply While I can afford to keep you merely at hunting the result to the table is so meagre that I m not justified There is no St James here in Pennsylvania no gentlemen supported by the Crown for the purpose of amusement You will have to sail for England if you expect that sort of thing He rose You owe an intelligent interest in Myrtle Forge to your sisters and mother toward all that I have accomplished It s a rich property and it s growing bigger Already young Forsythe has a list of improvements to be instituted at the Furnace — clerks and a manager and new system for carrying on the blast

' I m not an iron man Howat Penny told him

"I m not a clerk David can take all that over for you particularly if he marries one of the girls '

What are you? the elder demanded sharply

You ought to know You explained it fully enough to the Winscombes

If it wasn t for that you d have been dumping slag five years ago What I hoped was that with maturity some sense of obligation would be born into you What is this pretended affection for your mother worth if you are unwilling to conserve make safe her future in case I die? All that his father said was logical just but it only brought him a renewed sense of his impotence before very old and implacable inner forces

I ll try again he briefly agreed But I warn you it will do little good There is no pretence in the affection you spoke of but — but something stronger — he gave up as hopeless the effort to explain all that had swept through his mind

Gilbert Penny abruptly left the room

It transpired that the Italian servant was to be left at Myrtle Forge he was now assisting the servants in strapping a box behind the chaise that was to carry Mr Winscombe and David to the city Howat pictured the long supple hands of the Italian hooking Mrs Winscombe into her clothes and a sudden hot revulsion clouded his brain When the carriage had gone and he stood in the contracted space of the counting room before a long narrow forge book open on a high desk he was still conscious of

a strong repulsion It was idiotic to let such an insignificant fact as the Winscombes man persistently annoy him But in a manner entirely unaccountable this Cecco had become a symbol of much that was dark potentially threatening in his conjectures

The hammer fell with a full reiteration through the afternoon the sun at a small window shifted a dusty bar across inkpots and quills and desk to a higher corner He could hear the dull turning of the wheel and the thin irregular splash of falling water Other sounds rose at intervals — the tramping of mules dragging pig iron from Shadrach the rumble of its deposit by the Forge Emanuel Schwar entered with a piece of paper in his hand Eleven hundred weight of number two he read at six pounds and a load of charcoal Jonas Rupp charged with three pairs of woollen stockings and shoes for Minnie four shillings more

Howat mechanically entered the enumerated items his distaste for such a petty occupation mounting until it resembled a concrete power forcing him outside into the mellow end of the day A figure darkened the doorway it was Caroline I hardly saw him ' she declared hotly Myrtle hung like a sickly flower in his buttonhole Her hoops flattened as she made her way through the narrow entrance There s one thing about Myrtle she continued she s frightfully proper in her narrow little ideas Myrtle s a prude And I promise you I won t be if I get a chance at David She stood

with vivid parted lips bright eyes almost, Howat thought charming Such a spirit in Caroline amazed him he hadn t conceived of its presence He recognized a phase of his own contempt for customary paths accepted limitations and proprieties

Remember David s Quaker training he told her in his habitual air of jest David s been to London she replied I saw him pinch the Appletofft girl at the farm

Again in his room he changed into more formal clothes than on the evening previous he did this without a definite conscious purpose it was as if his attitude of mind required a greater suavity of exterior He wore a London waistcoat a gift from his mother of magenta worked with black petals and black stone buttons his breeches were without a wrinkle and the tails of his coat even if they were not wired like those David was said to have brought from England had a not unsatisfactory swing

At supper Mrs Winscombe sat at his left Caroline and Myrtle had taken their customary places opposite the elders had not been disturbed Mrs Winscombe had resumed the animation vanished at noon She wore green and white with plum coloured ribbons and a flat shirred cap tied under her chin The fluted clear lawn of her elbow sleeves was like a scented mist He was again conscious of the warm seduction the rare finish of her body like a flushed marble under wide hoops and dyed silk She was talking to Myrtle about the Court I am

in waiting with the Princess Amelia Sophia' she explained I have her stockings There is a frightful racket of music and parrots and German with old Handel bellowing and the King eternally clinking one piece of gold on another'

Gilbert Penny listened with a tightening of his well shaped lips It s into that chamber pot we pour our sweat and iron he asserted Ludowika Winscombe studied him In England she said the American provinces are supposed to lie hardly beyond the Channel but here England seems to be at the other end of the world Myrtle added I d like it immensely

And Howat thought of Ludowika — he thought of her tentatively as Ludowika — in the brilliant setting of tropical silks and birds

He considered the change that had overtaken his father English born in the quarter century he had lived in America the strong allegiance formed to ideas fundamentally different from those held at St James and he wondered if such a transformation would operate in Ludowika if she could remain in the Province It was a fantastic query and he impatiently dismissed it returning to the contemplation of his mother s problematic happiness He determined to question the latter if a permissible occasion arose suddenly his interest had sharpened toward her mental situation He compared the two women what he could conjecture about Isabel Howat and Ludowika Winscombe but something within him

automatic and certain whispered that no comparison was possible His mother possessed a quality of spirit that he had never found elsewhere he could see in spite of their resemblance of blood and position that the elder could never have been merely provocative Such distinctions he divined were the result of qualities mysterious and deeply concealed Love that he had once dismissed as the principle of blind procreation became more complex enigmatic He had no increased desire to experience it with the inevitable loss of personal liberty but he began to be conscious of new depths unexpected complications in human relationship

He was not so sure of himself

They had moved to the less formal of the rooms used as places of gathering The bed in a corner was hung in blue shalloon over ruffled white muslin and there was blue at the windows Against the wall a clavichord set aside as obsolete raised its dusky red ebony box on grooved legs Myrtle was seated at it picking out an air from Belshazzar She held each note in a silvery vibration that had the fragility of old age Ludowika was by the fire quartered across a corner there was no stove and the wood burning in the opening sent out frequent pungent waves of smoke She coughed and cursed Positively she declared ' I ll turn salt like a smoked herring '

She rose her gaze resting on Howat I must go out ' she continued ' breathe He was strangely reluctant to accompany her his feet were leaden

Nevertheless in a few moments he found himself at her side on the lawn Her sophistication had again disappeared beneath the stars drawn across the hills over Myrtle Forge There was a pause in the hammering below Take me down there she commanded

He led the way on a beaten path that dropped sharply to a bridge of hewn logs crossing the spent water The Forge a long shed following the stream was open on the opposite side an enclosure of ruddy, vaporous gloom with pools of molten colour clangorous sounds The bubbling white cores of three raised and hooded hearths were incessantly agitated with long rods by blackened and glistening shapes At intervals a flushing rod was withdrawn from a fire and plunged in a trough of water a cloud of ghostly steam arose a forgeman s visage momentarily illuminated like a copper mask A grimy lantern was hung above the *anvil its thin* light falling on the ponderous head of the trip hammer suspended at right angles from a turning cogged shaft projection through the wall

The hearths set in a row beyond the anvil had at their back an obscure mechanical stir accompanied by the audible suction of squat drum bellows The labour was halted at a fire half naked anatomies herculean shoulders and incredible arms gathered about its mouth with hooked bars An incandescent mass was lifted born rayed in an intolerable white heat into the air *A hammer was swung upon*

it and as if the metal were sentient a violet radiance scintillated where the blow had fallen The pasty iron was carried to the anvil the hooks dropped for wide jawed tongs the trip hammer moved up and fell The hardening metal darkened to a carnation from which chips scattered like gorgeous petals The carnation faded under ringing blows the petals heaping in the penumbra under foot, were as vividly blue as gentians The colour vanished from the solidifying bloom It was ashen black The hammering continued

A sense of the vast and antique simplicity of the forging a feeling of hammering the earth itself into the superior purposes of man enveloped Howat He forgot for the moment his companion lost in a swelling pride of Myrtle Forge of his father s fibre — the iron of his character like the iron he successfully wrought He could grasp Gilbert Penny s accomplishment here take fire at its heroic quality *a thing he found impossible in the counting room* above recording such trivial details as wool stockings for Jonas Rupp He could be a forgeman, he thought but never a clerk and in that limitation he realized that he was inferior to his father There were aspects of himself beyond such discipline and control

Ludowika Winscombe grasped his arm Come away ' she begged it s — it s savage like Vulcan and dreadful early legends She hurried him clinging to his arm over the ascent to the orderly

lawn the tranquil shine of candle lit windows There with her hood fallen from her head she sat on a stone step

You frighten me, a little' she confessed Are you at all like — like that below inside of you? I have a feeling that you might be If you were one of the men about Vauxhall you d be kissing me now if I liked you But although I do like you I wouldn t kiss you for an emerald buckle He recognized that she spoke seriously her voice bore no connective suggestion Kisses it appeared were no more to her than little flowers which she dealt out casually where she pleased Yet the idea with its intimate sensual implications stayed in his thoughts He considered kissing her holding her mouth against his and he was conscious of a sharp return of his stinging sense of her bodily seductiveness

At the same time an obscure uneasiness rebellion possessed him it was the old familiar feeling of revolt of distaste for *imprisoning circumstance* It came to him acutely almost as if a voice had whispered in his ear warning him urging him into the wild to escape threatening catastrophe He determined to leave Myrtle Forge in the morning to return to the stream he had followed into the serene heart of the woods There he would stay until — until Ludowika Winscombe had *gone* Howat had no especial sense of danger from her only for the moment she typified the entire world of trivial artifice He gazed at her with a conscious detachment

possible because of the rarity in his existence of such figures as hers

She had risen and her cloak fallen upon the grass Howat could see her face beneath hair faintly powdered with silver dust and the ruffled patch of white tied pertly under her chin Her smoothly turning shoulders filmed in lawn and low bodice crowned an extravagant circumference of ruffled silk and rosettes Against the night of the Province the invisible but felt presence of immutable hills she was like a puppet a grotesque figure of comedy He regarded her sombrely from the step his chin cupped in a hand

But again she surprised him speaking entirely out of the character he had assigned her in a spirit that seemed utterly incongruous but which was yet warm with conviction I want to explain a great deal to you' she said that really isn t explainable It isn t sensible and yet it is the strongest feeling I remember It s about here and you and me You can t picture my life and so you don t know how strange this is how different from all I've ever lived

I think I told you I was born in Paris — you see some of us came to France when Louis took a Polish princess and there my mother married an English gentleman Well it was always the Court in France and in England Always the Court — do you know what that means? It s a place where women are pretty pink and white candies that men

are always picking over It s a great bed with a rose silk counterpane and closed draperies Champagne and music and scent and masques Little plays with the intrigue in the audience favours behind green hedges I was in it when I was fourteen and I had a lover the first year He showed me how to make pleasure Don t think that I was indifferent to this she added directly that I wanted to escape it I wasn t I didn t Only beneath everything I had a feeling of not being completely satisfied I wanted — oh not very strongly — something else for an hour At times the air seemed choking and inside of me but not in my body I seemed choking too I used to think about the Polish forests and that would help a little

She resumed the place at his side with her silk billowing against his knee ' This is it she declared her face set against the illimitable still dark I recongized it only a littl while ago I think unconsciously I came to America hoping to find it there was nothing at Annapolis but here — she drew a breath as deep he noted as her stays would permit It includes you somehow she continued ' as if you were the voice What I said coming away from the Forge about dreading you was only momentary I have another feeling premonition — she broke off her manner changed All the Court believes in signs Protestantism and vampires

It seems unreal here I mean St James and all

that was so tremendously important incredibly stupid — the Princess Amelia s stockings But you can t imagine the jealousy Every bit of it shall go out of my thoughts You ll help me, a harmless magic I ll be as simple as that girl across the road with the red cheeks in a single slip You must call me Ludowika Ludowika and Howat I m not so terribly old only twenty nine

I am going away to morrow" he informed her ' I won t be back before you leave '

A slight frown gathered about her eyes Her face was very close to his "But I don t like that either she replied ' You were to be a part of it its voice excursions in the woods Is it neces sary your absence?"

He knew that it was not and suddenly he was seized with the conviction that he would not go It was as if again, a voice outside him had informed him of the fact But if there were no reason for his going there was as little for his remaining at Myrtle Forge that was so far as Ludowika Winscombe was concerned He had been untouched by all that she had said untouched except for a faint involun tary shiver as she had spoken of premonition And that had vanished instantaneously There was his duty in the counting house But he was forced to admit to himself the insufficiency of that reason it was too palpably false

He had not been moved by the intent of what she had said but his imagination had been stirred as if

by the touch of delicate pointed fingers at her de scription of Court — a bed with a silk counterpane behind clipped greenery He recalled the fan with its painted Villeggiatura the naked wanton loves ' Something different she half repeated with a sigh an accent of longing Howat heard her with impatience it was absurb to try to picture her tramping in the wilderness breaking her way hour after hour through thorned underbrush like Fanny Gilkan She wouldn t progress a hundred yards in her unsteady pattens and fragile clothes

Suddenly the Italian servant appeared absolutely noiselessly at her side speaking a ridiculous oily gibberish At once she replied She turned to Howat My bed has been prepared Are you going to morrow?

' No he answered awkwardly She turned and left without further words The servant walked be hind her resembling an unnatural shadow

The metallic clamour at the anvil rose and fell diminished by the interposed bulk of the dwellings ceaselessly forging the Penny iron the Penny gold He thought of himself as metal under the hammer or rather ore at the furnace he hadn t run clear in the casting there were bubbles bubbles and slag Endless refinements — first the furnace and then the forge and then the metal A contempt for the lesser degrees possessed him for a flawed or clumsy forg ing for weakness of the flesh the fatality of easy surrender An overwhelming passionate emotion

swept him to his feet clenched his hands filled him with a numbing desire to reach the last purification

The mood sank into an inexplicable nostalgia he dragged the back of a hand impatiently across his vision His persistent indifference, the inhibition that held him in a contemptuous isolation again possessed him Howat, a black Penny A last trace of his emotion caught in the flood of his paramount disdain vanished like a breath of warm mist He entered the house and mounted to his room the stairs creaked but that was the only sound audible within His candles burned without their protecting glasses in smooth unwavering flames When they were extinguished the darkness flowed in and blotted out familiar objects folded him in a cloak of invisibility obliterated him in sleep As he lost consciousness he heard the trip hammer dully beating out Penny iron Penny gold beating out too the Penny men Slag and metal and ruffled muslin *roman candles and stars*

V

THERE came to him in the counting house the following afternoon rumours and echoes of the day s happenings David Forsythe had arrived after dinner and there had been word from Mr Winscombe he would be obliged to return to Maryland and trusted that Ludowika would not be an onerous charge David was to take Myrtle and Caroline back with him to the city for an exemplary Quaker party 'There s no good asking you he told Howat lounging in the door of the counting room David was flushed his sleeve coated with dust 'Caroline he exclaimed is as strong as a forgeman she upset me on the grass as quickly as you please hooked her knee behind me and there I was She picked me up too and laughed at me he stopped lost in thought Myrtle s really beautiful he said again Caroline s not a thing to look at and yet do you know a — a man looks at her She is wonderfully graceful

Howat gave Caroline the vigorous stamp of his brotherly approval She understands a lot for a girl he admitted Of course Myrtle s a particular peach but I d never go to her if a buckle — he stopped abruptly as Myrtle appeared at David s

side 'Isn t he industrious?' she said indiffer ently Youd never guess how father s at him Have you heard Howat — Mrs Winscombe will be here perhaps a month It s a wonder you haven t gone away you are so frightfully annoyed by peo ple Last night you were with her over an hour on the lawn I could see that father thought it queer but I explained to him that court women never thought of little things like well husbands

Howat gazed at her coldly for the first time con scious that he actually disliked Myrtle He made up his mind definitely to assist Caroline as far as possible She was absurd criticizing Mrs Wins combe Where he demanded did you get all that about courts? And your sudden tender inter est in husbands? That s new too You re not thinking of one for yourself are you? He d never see you down in the morning

A bright angry colour flooded her cheeks You are as coarse as possible she declared I m sure I wish you d stay away altogether from Myrtle Forge you ve never been anything but a bother' She left abruptly Sweet disposition Howat grinned You are seeing family life as it s actually lived" Later his thoughts returned to what she had said about Ludowika Winscombe he recalled the latter s speech seated on the doorstep some stuff about a premonition Myrtle had suggested that he was interested in her What ridiculous non sense! If his father said anything on that score

the other would discover that he was no longer a boy Besides such insinuations were a breach of hospitality How Mrs Winscombe would laugh at them if she suspected Myrtle s cheap folly

She had asked him to call her Ludowika He decided that he would really he couldn t get out of it now It would do no harm Ludowika! It was a nice name undoubtedly Polish He thought again about what she had said of Polish forests the dissatisfaction that had followed her for so many years A lover at fourteen A surprising sentence formed of itself in his brain — She had never had a chance That pasty court life had spoiled her It had no significance for himself he was simply revolving a slightly melancholy fact

Felix Winscombe was a sere figure yet he was extraordinarily full of a polished virility rapier like Howat could see the dark satirical face shadowed by th elaborate wig the rigid figure in precise foppish dress He heard Winscombe s slightly harsh dominant voice His position in England was he knew secure high Ludowika had been very sensible in marrying him That was the way Howat Penny told himself that marriage should be consummated He would never marry David Schwar appeared with a sheaf of papers which he himself proceeded to docket and Howat l ft the counting room

He met Ludowika almost immediately she advanced more simply dressed than he had ever seen

her before She pointed downward to the water flashing over the great turning wheel Couldn t we walk along the rill? There s a path and it s beautiful in the shadow The stream poured solid and green through the narrow masoned course of the forebay sweeping in a lucent arc over the lip of the fall An earthen path followed the artificial channel through a dense grove of young maples seeming to hold the sun in their flame coloured foli age Myrtle Forge was lost the leaves shut out the sky underfoot some were already dead The wilder ness marched up to the edges of the meagre clearings

Ludowika walked ahead without speech irregu lar patches of ruddy light slid over her flared skirt Suddenly she stopped with an exclamation the trees opened before them on the broad Canary sweeping between flat rocks banks bluely green Above the course was brok n swift but where they stood it was tranquil again and crystal clear Yellow rays plunging through the unwrinkled surface gilded the pebbles on the shallower bottom A rock broad and flat extended into the stream by the partial diag onal dam that turned the water into Myrtle Forge and Ludowika found a seat with her slippers just above the current Howat Penny sat beside her then dropped back on the rocks his hands clasped behind his head

A silence intensified by the whispering stream en veloped them He watched a hawk diminutive on the pale immensity above Heavens Ludowika

finally spoke how wonderful just to sit, not to be bothered by — by things Just to hear the water Far away she said dreamily 'girl"

From where he lay he could see her arms beautiful and bare lost in soft Holland above the elbows he could see the roundness of her body above the lowest of stays Suddenly she fascinated him he visualized her sharply as though for the first time — a warm intoxicating entity He was profoundly disturbed and sat erect the stream the woods blurred in his vision He felt as if his heart had been turned completely over in his body the palms of his hands were wet He had a momentary absurd impulse to run beyond Shadrach Furnace beyond any distance he had yet explored farther even than St Xavier Ludowika Winscombe gazed in serene unconscious happiness before her He felt that his face was crimson and he rose moved to the water s edge his back toward her He was infuriated at a trembling that passed over him *damned it in a savage and inaudible whisper*

What particularly appalled him was the fact that his overmastering sensation came without the slightest volition of his own He had had nothing to do with it his will was powerless He was betrayed like a fortified city whose gate had been thrown open by an unsuspected a concealed traitor inside In an instant he had been invaded his being levelled his peculiar pride overthrown He thought even that he heard a dull crash as if something para

mount had irremediably fallen something that should have been maintained at any cost until the end of life

Howat felt a sudden hatred of his companion but that quickly evaporated he discovered that she had spread like a drop of carmine in a goblet of water, through his every nerve By God but she had become himself! In the space of a breath she was in his blood in his brain calling his hands about her toward her smooth beautiful arms She was the scent in his nostrils the sound a breeze newly sprung up stirred out of the leaves A profound melancholy spread over him a deep sadness a conviction of loss Ludowika was singing softly

> L st Sund y at St. James s prayers
> —dressed in all my wh l bone airs"

He had come on disaster The realization flashed through his consciousness and was engulfed in the submerging of his being in the overwhelming stinging blood that had swept him from his old security Yet he had been so detached from the merging influences about him his organization had been so complete in its isolation his egotism so developed that a last trace of his entity lingered sentient viewing as if from a careened but still tenable deck the general submergence His thoughts returned to the automatic operation of the consummation obliterating his person the inexorable blind movement of the thing in which he had been caught dragged into the

maw of a supreme purpose It was of course the law of mere procreation which he had before contemptuously recognized and dismissed a law for animals but he was no longer entirely an animal Already he had considered the possibility of an additional force in the directing of human passion founded on something beyond the thirst of flesh founded perhaps on soaring companionships on — on— The condition the term he was searching for evaded him

He thought of the word love and he was struck by the vast inaccuracy of that large phrase It meant Howat told himself literally nothing what complex feeling Isabel Penny might have for her husband Caroline s frank desire for David Forsythe Myrtle s meagre emotion Fanny Gilkan s sense of Hesa and life s necessary compromises his own collapse — all were alike called love It was not only a useless word but a dangerous falsity It had without question cloaked immense harm pretence it had perpetuated old lies brought them plausibly as if in a distinguished and reputable company out of past superstitions and credulity the real and the meaningless the good and the evil hopelessly confused

They were seated at supper four of them only Isab l and Gilbert Penny and opposite him Ludowika Occasionally he would glance at her surreptitiously his wrists would pound with an irregular sultry circulation longing would harass him like

the beating of a club She it seemed to him grew gayer younger more simple every hour Happiness peace radiated in her gaze the gestures of her hands Howat wondered at what moment he would destroy it Reprehensible A moment must come — soon — when emotion would level his failing reserve his falling defences He thrilled at the thought of the inevitable disclosure Would she fight against it deny satirize his tumult or surrender? He couldn t see clearly into that he didn t care Then he wondered about the premonition of which she had spoken deciding to ask her to be more explicit

An opportunity occurred later Gilbert Penny had gone down to the Forge store his wife had disappeared Ludowika Winscombe and Howat were seated in the drawing room Only a stand of candles was lit at her elbow her face floated like a pale and lovely wafer against the billowing shadows of the chamber The wood on the iron hearth was charring without flame He questioned her bluntly suddenly out of a protracted silence She regarded him speculatively delaying answer Then I couldn t tell you like this now it would be too silly you would laugh at me I hadn t meant to say even what I did I d prefer to ignore it

What did you mean what premonition came to you? he insisted crudely

She seemed to draw away from him increase in years and an attitude of tolerant amusement Only

an immediate reply would save them he realized. He leaned forward unsteadily with clenched hands ' I warned you she proceeded lightly and if you do laugh my pride will suffer In spite of her obvious determination to speak indifferently her voice grew serious "I had a feeling that you mustn t kiss me that this — America the Province Myrtle Forge you were for something different You see I had always longed for a peculiar experience release and when it came miraculously I thought it must not be spoiled turned into the old old thing That was all It was in my spirit she added almost defiantly as if that claim might too be susceptible of derision

He settled back into his chair turning upon her a gloomy vision Whatever penalty threatened them, he knew must fall Nothing existing could keep him from it He felt a fleet sorrow for her in the inevitable destruction of the release for which she had so long searched her new peace so soon to be smashed All sorrow for himself had gone under Isabel Penny returned to the drawing room and moved about her flowered silk at once gay and obscure in the semidarkness The fire Howat she directed it s all but out He stirred the logs into a renewed blaze

A warm gilding flickered over Ludowika she smiled at him relaxed content He was surprised that she could not see the tumultuous feeling overpowering him He had heard that women were im

mediately aware of such emotion But he realized that she had been lulled into a false sense of security, of present immunity from ' the old, old thing by her own placidity He did not know when his mother left the room He wondered continuously when it would happen when the bolt would fall, what she would do Howat was hot and cold and possessed by a subtle sense of improbity a feeling resembling that of a doubtful advance through the dark, for a questionable end This was the least part of him insignificant his passion grew constantly stronger more brutal In a last vanishing trace of his superior consciousness he recognized that the thing mu t have happen d to him as it did it was the price of his more erect pride, his greater contempt, his solitary and unspent state

She rose suddenly and announced that she was about to retire It saved them for the moment for that day he muttered something incomprehensible and she was gone

Isabel Penny returned and took Mrs Winscombe s place before the fire She spoke trivially at random intervals A great longing swept over him to tell his mother everything try to find an escape in her wise counsel but his emotion seemed so ugly that he could not lay it before her Besides he had a conviction that it would be hopeless he was gone She was discussing Ludowika now Really ' she said "they seem very well matched a good arrangement " She was referring he realized to the Wins

combes experience He never thought of Felix Winscombe as married Ludowika s husband he had ceased to think of him at all The present moment banished everything else She has a quality usually destroyed by life about a Court the leisurely voice went on she seems quite happy here for a little in a way simple But curiously enough she disturbs your father He can t laugh with her as he usually does with attractive women

It was natural Howat thought that Gilbert Penny should be uneasy before such a direct reminder of the setting from which he had taken Isabel Howat It was a life memories in which the elder had no part that consciousness dictated a part of his father s bitterness toward St James the Royal Government But Gilbert Penny had never had serious reason to dread it His wife had left it all behind permanently without apparently a regret He had a sudden astonishing community of feeling with he older man a momentary dislike of St James Versailles the entire treacherous silk mob A lover at fourteen! Howat damned such a betrayal with a bitterness whose base lay deeply buried in sex jealousy

I am glad the other continued that you are not susceptible I suppose you ll be off hunting in a day or more Mrs Winscombe is bright wine for a young man Women like h r play at sensation like eating figs He thought contemptuously what nonsense was talked in connection with feminine in

tuition it was nothing more than a polite chimera, like all the other famous morals and inhibitions supposed to serve and direct mankind

He wondered once more about his mother what the course of her life had been — happily occupied filled or merely self contained hiding much in a deep even flow? Her head was turned away from him and he could see the girlish profile the astonishing illusion of youth renewed Howat wanted to ask her how she had experienced well — love since there was no other word It had come to her quickly he knew her affair with Gilbert Penny had been headlong or else it would not have been at all yet he felt she had not been the victim of such a tyranny as mastered himself But perhaps after all secretly every one was — just animal like He repudiated this firmly at once He himself had felt that he was not entirely animal

The girls Isabel Penny said will be galloping now Myrtle has a new dress her father gave it to her an apricot mantua

He's really idiotic about Myrtle' Howat declared irritably His mother glanced swiftly at him She made no comment Now Caroline' It's Caroline who ought to marry David Forsythe

Such things must fall out as they will

God that was true enough terribly true! He rose and strode into the farther darkness of the drawing room returning to the fireplace marching away again He saw the white glimmer of Ludo

wika s arms he had a vision of her tying the broad ribbon about her rounded silken knee a man now his mother s voice was distant blurred

Responsibilities your father— He had heard this before without being moved but suddenly the words had a new actuality he was a man now that was to say he stood finally irrevocably alone beyond assistance advice He had never heeded them he had gone a high handed independent way but the others had been there unconsciously he had been aware of them even counted on them Now they had vanished

Caroline and Myrtle bringing David with them again returned on the following morning It seemed to Howat that the former was almost lovely she had a gayer sparkle a clearer colour than he had ever seen her possess before On the other hand Myrtle was dull the dress it seemed had not been the unqualified success she had hoped for Something newer had arrived in the meantime from London Ludowika it developed had one of the later sacques in her boxes but that she said indifferently must be quite dead now It seemed to Howat that she too regarded Myrtle without enthusiasm Ludowika and Myrtle had had very little to say to each other Myrtle studied Mrs Winscombe s apparel with a keen even belligerent eye the other patronized the girl in a species of half absent instruction

The sky was flawless leaden blu the sunlight fell in an enveloping flood over the countrysid but

it was pale without warmth There was no wind, not a leaf turned on the trees — a sinuous sheeting of the country side like red gold armour But Howat knew that at the first stir of air the leaves would be in stricken flight, the autumn accomplished Caroline dragged him impetuously down into the garden among the brown varnished stems of the withered roses the sere dead ranks of scarlet sage ' He hugged me she told him I was quite breathless It was in a hall dark but he didn t say anything What do you think?' There was nothing definite that he might express and he patted her shoulder He had a new kinship with Caroline Howat now understood her tempest of feeling concealed beneath her commonplace daily aspect

Myrtle and David joined them and he left resumed his place at the high desk in the counting house Strangely his energy of being communicated itself to the prosaic work before him It was he suddenly felt important for him to master the processes of Myrtle Forge it would not do for him to remain merely irresponsible a juvenile appendage to the Penny iron He would need all the position the weight he could assume and money of his own He found a savage pleasure in recording every detail put before him He compared the value of pig metal the cost of charcoal wages with the return of the blooms and anconies they shipped to England Howat experienced his father s indignation at the manner in which London limited the Province s in

dustries For the first time he was conscious of an actual interest in the success of Myrtle Forge a personal concern in its output He had always visualized it as automatically prosperous a cause of large inexact pride but now it was all near to him he considered the competition rapidly increasing here and the jealous menace over seas

His final trace of careless youth had gone he felt the advent of the constant apprehension that underlies all maturity a sense of the proximity of blind accident evil chance disaster At last he was opposed to life itself with an immense stake to gain to hold in the midst of a seething treacherous conflict arbitrarily ended by death There was no cringing absolutely no cowardice in him He was glad that it was all immediately about him he was arrogant in pressing forward to take what he wanted from existence He forgot all premonitions doubt was behind him he no longer gauged the value of his desire for Ludowika Winscombe She was something he would had to have

David Forsythe sat across the back of a chair in Howat s room as the latter dressed in the rapidly failing light David had smuggl d his London coat with the wired tails out to Myrtle Forge and had the stiffened portion now spread smoothly out on either side His cheerful freshly coloured face was troubled he seemed constantly on the point of breaking into speech without actually becoming audible Howat was thinking of Ludowika It would hap

pen to night he knew He was at once apprehensive and glad

You knew David ventured finally ' that I m supposed to ask Myrtle to marry me That is your father and mine hoped I would Well he drew a deep breath I don t think I shall Of course she is one of the prettiest girls any one ever saw and she s quite bright — it s wonderful what she has picked up about the Furnace but yet — his speech suddenly ran out With an effort Howat brought himself back from his own vastly more important concern Yes? he queried pausing with his fingers in the buttonholes of a mulberry damask coat I have decided to choose to act for my self David announced this is a thing where every man must be absolutely free — Caroline can have me if she likes

Howat could not avoid a momentary inward flicker of amusement at David Forsythe s absolute freedom of choice He felt infinitely older than the other wiser in the circuitous mysteries of being He pounded David on the back exclaimed Good!

I don t know whether to speak to Abner the other proceeded unfilially or the great Penny first I don t care too much for either job It would be pleasanter to go to Caroline I have an idea she doesn t exactly dislike me

Perhaps I oughtn t to tell you Howat replied gravely but Caroline thinks a lot of you She has admitted it to me —

David Forsythe danced agilely about the more serious figure he kicked Howat gaily from behind ironically patted his cheek Hell s buttons! he cried Why didn t you tell me that before? You cast iron ass! I ll marry Caroline if I have to take her to a charcoal burner s hut She would go too

Howat Penny gripped the other s shoulder faced him with grim determination Do you fully realize that Myrtle Forge Shadrach will be us? They will be ours and our wives and childrens We must stand together David whatever happens whatever we may personally think The iron is big now but it is going to be great We mustn t fail fall apart We ll need each other there s going to be trouble I think

David put out his hand I didn t know you felt like that Howat he replied the effervescent youth vanished from him too It s splendid We ll hammer out some good blooms together And for the other nothing shall ever make a breach between us

VI

THEY went down to the supper table silently absorbed in thought David was placed where Mr Winscombe had been seated, on Mrs Penny s right and next to Myrtle Gilbert Penny maintained a flow of high spirits he rallied every one at the table with the exception of Howat noted Ludowika Her hair was simply arranged and undecorated she wore primrose with gauze like smoke an apparently guileless bodice with blurred warm suggestions of her fragrant body Howat was conscious of every detail of her appearance she was stamped as she was that evening indelibly on his inner being He turned toward her but little, addressed to her only the most perfunctory remarks he was absorbed in the realization that the most fateful moment he had met was fast approaching His father s cheerful voice continued seemingly interminably now it was a London beauty to which he affected to believe David had given his heart The latter replied stoutly

'I brought that back safely enough it s here the danger lies Humiliating to cross the ocean and then be lost in Canary Creek

Gilbert Penny shot an obvious humorous glance

at Myrtle She did not meet it but sat with lowered gaze Caroline *made a daring nose'* at Howat but he too failed to acknowledge her message David s affair had sunk from his thoughts The drawing room was brilliantly lighted there was a constant stir of peacock silk of yellow and apple green and coral lutestring of white shoulders in the gold radiance of candles like stiff rows of narcissi Caroline drifted finally into the chamber back of the dining room and they could hear the tenuous vibrations of the clavichord Soon David had disappeared The elder Penny discovered Myrtle seated sullenly at her mother s side and taking her arm he escorted her in the direction of the suddenly silenced music

Ludowika sat on a small couch away from the fireplace She smiled at Howat as he moved closer to her She never did things with her hands he noticed like the women of his family embroidery or work on little heaps of white She sat motionless her arms at rest His mother seemed far away The pounding recommenced unsteadily at his wrists the room wavered in his vision Ludowika permeated him like a deep draught of intoxicating yellow wine He had a curious sensation of floating in air of tea roses It was clear that folded in happy contentment she still realized nothing She must know now any minute Howat saw that his mother had gone

He rose and stood *before* Ludowika *leaning*

slightly over her She raised her gaze to his her interrogation deepened Then her expression changed clouded her lips parted she half raised a hand Her breast rose and fell sharply once Howat picked her up by the shoulders and crushed her silk and cool gauze and mouth against him Ludowika s skirts billowed about half hid, him a long silence a long kiss

Her head fell back with a sigh she drooped again upon the sofa She hadn t struggled exclaimed even now there was no revolt in her countenance only a deep trouble Howat she said softly 'you shouldn t have done that It was brutal selfish You — you knew, after all that I told you the premonition — she broke off, anger shone brighter in her eyes How detestable men are' She turned away from him her profile against the brocade of the sofa Unexpectedly he was almost cold and self contained he saw the gilded angle of a frame on the wall heard the hickory disintegrating on the hearth

He had kissed her as a formal declaration what must come would come I was an imbecile she spoke in a voice at once listless and touched with bitterness Arcadia " she laughed ' I thought it was different here that you were different that feeling in my heart — but it s gone now dead I suppose I should thank you But do you know I regret it I would rather have stayed at St James all my life and kept that single little delusion longing

The premonition was nonsense too nothing new unexpected can happen Kisses are almost the oldest things in the world kisses and their results What is there to be afraid of? You see I learned it all quite *young*

' I am an imbecile only it came so suddenly You would laugh at me if you knew what I was thinking I can even manage a smile at myself She appeared older the Mrs Winscombe who had first come to Myrtle Forge her mouth was flippant

The eternal Suzanna' she remarked the monotonous elders or younger He paid little heed to her words the oldness the indifference were fast leaving him His heart was like the trip hammer at the Forge Yellow wine He was still standing above her and he took her hands in his She put up her face with a movement of bravado of mockery which he ignored

I didn t choose it he told her it s ruined all that I was Now I don t care there is nothing else One thing you are wrong about — if there had been another in your life like myself you wouldn t be here with — as you are I m certain of that It s the only thing I do know My feeling may be a terrible misfortune I didn t make it I can t see the end There isn t any I think He pressed her hands to his throat with a gesture that half dragged her from the sofa A deeper colour stained her cheeks and her breath caught End less he repeated losing the word on her lips She

wilted into a corner of the sofa and he strode over to the fire stood gazing blindly at the pulsating em bers Howat returned to her almost immediately but she made no sign of his nearness The bitter ness had left her face she appeared weary pallid she sat heedlessly crumpling her flounces a hand bent back on its wrist

I think it is something in myself' she said presently 'something a little wrong that I m dread fully tired of Always men Out here a Howat Penny just like any fribble about the Court God I d like to be that girl across the road in the barn yard He was back at the fire again when Gilbert Penny entered the room The latter dropped a palm on Howat s shoulder

' Schwar says the last sow metal was faulty he declared the Furnace ll need some attention with Abner Forsythe deeper in the Provincial affairs Splendid thing David s back Look for a lot from David Howat hoped desperately that Ludowika would not leave go to her room while his father was talking David says you have an und rstanding will do great things I hope so I hope so I won t damn him as an example but he will do you no harm That is if he touches your confounded per son at all A black Penny Mrs Winscombe he said turning to the figure spread in pale silk on the sofa Fortunate for you to have no such con founded stubborn lot on your hands Although' he added laughingly Felix Winscombe s no broken

reed But this boy of mine — you might think he had been run out of Shadrach he tapped a finger on Howat s back Not like those fellows about the Court anyway They tell me he ll go fifty miles through the woods in a day Now if we could only keep that at the iron trade —'

His father went on insufferably without end Howat withdrew stiffly from the other s touch Irresistibly he drifted back back to Ludowika She had not moved her bent hand seemed dislocated An immense tenderness for her overwhelmed him his sheer passion vapourized into a poignant sweetness of solicitous feeling He was protective his jaw set rigidly he enveloped her in an angry barrier from all the world He had a sensation of standing at bay in his mulberry damask in brocade and silver buttons he had an impression of himself stooped and savage confronting a menacing dark with Ludowika flung behind him Inexplicable tremors assailed him vast fears His father s deliberate voice destroyed the illusion he saw the candles about him like white and yellow flowers the suave interior The others had returned He heard Ludowika speaking she laughed His tension relaxed Suddenly he was flooded with happiness as if he had been drenched in sparkling delightful water He joined in the gay trivial clamour that arose Isabel Penny gazed at him speculatively

There would it appeared be no other opportunity

that evening for him to declare himself to Ludowika He was vaguely conscious of his mother s scrutiny he must avoid exposing Ludowika to any uncom fortable surmising His thoughts leaped forward to a revelation that he began to feel was inevitable he got even now a tangible pleasure from the consider ation of an announcement of his passion for Ludo wika Winscombe a sheer insistence upon it in the face of an antagonistic world But for the present he must be careful This the greatest event that had befallen him summed up all that he innately was it expressed him a black Penny, ab- solutely Howat felt the distance between himself, his convictions and the convictions of the world immeasurably widening His feeling for Ludowika lized his isolation from the interwoven fabric ne plane of society it gave at last a tangible k to his scorn

As he had feared presently she rose and went to her room Myrtle took her place on the sofa Gilbert Penny vanished with a broad witticism at the well known preference of youth in certain situ ation for its own council David Forsythe made a wry face at Howat Caroline gaily laid her arm across her mother s shoulder and propelled her from the room David stood awkwardly in the mid dle of the floor and Howat hardly less clumsy took his departure He found Caroline awaiting him in the shadow of his door she followed him and stood silent while he made a light Her face was serious

and her hands clasped tightly ' Howat she said in a small voice it s — it s that is David loves me. Whatever do you suppose father and Myrtle will say?

What do you think David is saying to Myrtle now? he asked drily I am glad Caroline every thing worked out straight for you David is a damned good Quaker For some others life isn t so easy She laid a warm hand on his shoulder ' I wish you were happy Howat A slight irritation seized him at the facile manner in which she radiated her satisfaction and he moved away

David s going back to night I wish he wouldn t *she said troubled* That long dark way Any thing might happen But he has simply got to be at *his father s office in the morning* *He is going* to speak to him first see what will be given us at the Furnace

It should be quite a family party at breakfast Howat predicted

'I was sure of it Myrtle cried ' he — he has talked against me helped Caroline behind my back She sobbed thinly with her arm across her eyes 'If I thought anything like that had occurred' their father asserted " Howat would — he paused gazing heavily about at his family

Howat s ill temper arose 'Yes —?' he demanded with a sharp inflection " Be still Howat ' his mother said unexpectedly 'This is all very regrettable Gilbert she told her husband but it is an impossible subject of discussion ' Gilbert Penny continued hotly 'He wouldn t stay about here' She replied equably On the contrary Howat shal' be at Myrtle Forge until he himself chooses to leave

Howat was conscious of a surprise almost as mo ing as that pictured on his father s countenance He had never heard Isabel Penny speak in that man ner before perhaps at last she would reveal what he had long speculated over — her true inner situ ation But he saw at once that he was to be again disappointed the speaker was immediately enveloped in her detachment the air that seemed almost one of a spectator in the Penny household She smiled deprecatingly How fine she was Howat thought Gilbert Penny did not readily recover from his con sternation his surprise had notably increased to that His mouth was open his face red and agi tated Before the children ' com plained Don t know what to

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HE was entirely right Ludowika rarely appeared so early Myrtle s face seemed wan and pinched and her father rallied her on her indisposition after what should have been an entrancing evening She declared suddenly I hate David Forsythe! Gilbert Penny was obviously startled Caroline half rose as if she had finished breakfast but she sat down again with an expression of determination Howat looked about from his removed place of being I do! Myrtle u At first he seemed to like — I mean I him and then everything changed got horrid one interfered Resentment dominated her she grew shrill with anger suspicion him making faces at Howat as if he and Howat as if Howat had well —

Don t generalize said Howat coolly be particular

As if you had deliberately sp chance yes she declared defiantly any had

That s ridiculous Gilbert l

What he asked his wife at? She prof If

"Howat would

young Forsythe He knows what we all hope' Caroline suddenly leaned forward speaking in a level voice 'This has nothing to do with Howat but with me I am going to tell you at once so that you can all say what you wish get as angry as you like and then accept what — what had to be David and I love each other we are going to be married

Gilbert Penny's surprise slowly gave place to a dark tide suffusing his countenance You and David he half stuttered getting married — like that Myrtle was rigid in an indignation that left her momentarily without speech Mrs Penny Howat saw drew into the slight remoteness from which she watched the conflicts of her family I know I m fearfully bold yes indecent Caroline went on and undutiful impertinent I m sorry truly for that Perhaps you ll forgive me later But I won t apologize for loving David

Incredible her father pronounced A girl announcing without the slightest warrant or au thority that she intends to marry And trampling on her sister s heart in the bargain Howat ex postulated What does it matter which he marries? The main affair is to consolidate the families The elder glared at him 'Be silent'' he com manded Howat Penny s ever present resentment rose to the surface I am not a girl he stated "nor yet a nigger And personally I think David was extremely wise

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surely you don t uphold Howat? Outrageous conduct if it s true And Myrtle so gentle never hurt any one in her life Myrtle circled the table and found a place in his arms If they had only told me she protested If Caroline — He patted her flushed cheeks ' Don t give it another thought he directed a girl as pretty as you' I ll take you to London where you ll have a string of men not Quakers fine as peacocks He bent his gaze on his son

Didn t I tell you last evening that the cast metal has been light? he demanded Must I beg you to go to the Furnace? Or perhaps that too conflicts with your mother s fears for you There are stumps in the road There was a whisper of skirts at the door and Ludowika Winscombe stood smiling at them Myrtle turned her tear swollen face upon her father s shoulder Howat wondered if Ludowika had slept He endeavoured in vain to discover from her serene countenance something of her thoughts of what had occurred He had a sudden inspiration

I can go to Shadrach as soon as Adam saddles a horse he told his father You were curious about the Furnace he added to Ludowika masking the keen anxiety he felt at what was to follow it s a sunny day a pleasant ride She answered without a trace of feeling other than a casual politeness

Thank you since it will be my only opportunity I ll have to change She was gazing Howat dis

covered lightly at Isabel Penny "I must get the figures from Schwar his father said Before he left the room he moved to his wife s side, rested his hand on her shoulder She looked up at him with a reassuring nod Howat saw that whatever it might be the bond between them was secure stronger than any differences of prejudices or blood more potent than time itself The group the strain about the table broke up

The horses footed abreast over the road that crossed the hills and forded the watered swales be tween Myrtle Forge and the Furnace Ludowika, riding astride enveloped and hooded in bottle green had her face muffled in a linen riding mask He wondered vainly what expression she bore Speech he found unexpectedly difficult His passion mounted and mounted within him all his being swept unresist ingly in its tid Howat said at last

Are you still so angry at life at yourself? '

No' she replied I slept that foolishness away I must have sounded like a character in *The Lying Valet* Her present mood obscurely troubled him he infinitely preferred her in the pale crumpled silk and candle light of the evening before 'I wish I could tell you what I feel' he said moodily

Why not? she replied It s the most amus ing thing possible You advance and I seem to re treat you reach forward and grasp — my fan a handful of petticoat you protest and sulk —

Perhaps in Vauxhall he interrupted her sav

agely "but not here not like that not with me This is not a gavotte I didn t want it I tried to get away but it you had me in a breath At once it was all over God knows what it is Call it love It isn t a thing under a hedge I tell you that for an hour It s stronger than anything else that will ever touch me it will last longer Like falling into a river Perhaps I m different a black Penny but what other men take like water a woman is brandy for me I m—I m not used to it I haven t wanted Kate here and Mary there but only you I ve got to have you he said with a marked simplicity I ve got to or there will be a bad smash

Ludowika rode silently hid in her mask He urged his horse closer to her and laid a hand on her swaying shoulder I didn t choose this' he repeated the blame s somewhere else He felt a tremor run through her Why say blame?' she finally answered I hate moralities and excuses and tears If you are set on being gloomy and talking to heaven about damnation take it all away from me A shadow moved across the countryside and he saw clouds rising out of the north. A sudden wind swept through the still forest and immediately the air was aflame with rushing autumn leaves They fell across Howat s face and eddied about the horses legs The grey bank deepened in space the sun vanished the wind was bleak It seemed to Howat Penny that the world had changed

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its gold stricken to dun and gaunt branches in an instant The road descended to the clustered stone houses about Shadrach Furnace

The horses were left under the shed of the smithy at the primitive cross roads Thomas Gilkan had gone to the river about a purchase of casting sand but expected to be back for the evening run of metal Fanny was away, Howat learned visiting Dan Hesa s family They would of course have dinner at the Heydricks and the latter sent a boy home to prepare his wife Ludowika and Howat aimlessly fol lowed the turning road that mounted to the coal house A levelled and beaten path built up with stone led out to the top of the stack where a group of sooty figures were gathered about the clear al most smokeless flame of the blast Below they lingered on the grassy edge of the stream banked against the hillside and flooding smoothly to the clamorous fall and revolving wheel by the wood shed that covered the bellows Pointed downward the latter spasmodically discharged a rush of air with a vast creasing of their dusty leather A procession of men were wheeling and dumping slag into a dreary area beyond There was a stir of constant life about the Furnace voices calling the ringing of metal on metal the creak of barrows dogs bark ing The plaintive melody of a German song rose on the air

Behind a blood red screen of sumach Howat again kissed Ludowika Her arms tightened about his

neck she raised her face to him with an abandon that blinded him to the world about and his entire being was drawn in an agony of desire to his lips She sank limply into his rigid embrace a warm sensuous burden with parted lips

At the Heydricks he ate senselessly whatever was placed before him The house solidly built of grey stone traced with iron had two rooms on the lower floor The table was set before a fireplace that filled the length of the wall its mantel a great roughly squared log mortared into the stones on either side Small windows opened through deep embrasures a door bound with flowering wrought hinges faced the road and a narrow flight of stairs with a polished rail and white post led above Mrs Heydrick a large woman in a capacious Holland apron and worsted shoes moved about the table with steaming pewter trenchards while Heydrick and their guests dined

Howat Penny s face burned as if from a violent fever his veins it seemed were channels through which ran burning wine He was deafened by the tumult within him Heydrick s voice sounded flat and blurred They were conscious at Shadrach of the thin quality of the last metal The charge had been poorly mad up he Heydrick had said at once when the cinders had come out black that the lime had been short His word fled through Howat s brain like racing birds the latter s motions were unsteady inexact

The clouds had now widened in a sagging plain across the sky, some scattered rain pattered coldly on the fallen leaves It was pleasant before the hickory burning in the deep fireplace the Heydricks had taken for granted that they would wait there for Thomas Gilkan and they protested when Howat and Ludowika moved toward the door But Howat was restless beyond any possibility of patiently hearing Mrs Heydrick s cheerful trivial talk He was so clumsy with Ludowika s cloak that she took it from him and with a careless feminine scorn in common with Mrs Heydrick got into it without assistance They stood for a while in the cast house watching a keeper rolling and preparing the pig bed for the evening flow They were pressed close together in a profound gloom of damp warmth rising from the wet sand and furnace An obscure figure moved a heavy and faintly clanging pile of tamping bars The sound of rain on the roof grew louder, continuous A poignant and then strangling emotion clutched at Howat Penny s throat Silently they turned from the murky interior

A grey rain was plastering the leaves on the soggy ground puddles accumulated in the scarred road the smoke from the smithy hung low on the roof At the left a small stone house had a half opened door Ludowika looked within ' For storing Howat told her Inside were piled sledges and cinder hooks bars and moulds and bales of tanned hides Ludowika explored in the shadows A sudden eddy of

gathered about the furnace hearth in which he saw Thomas Gilkan He moved forward to call the latter but a tapping was in progress and he was forced to wait Gilkan swung a long bar against a low clay face and instantly the murky interior was ablaze with a crackling radiance against which the tense figures wavered in magnified silhouettes The metal poured out of the furnace in a continuous blinding white explosion hung with fans of sparkling gold the channels of the pig bed rapidly filled with the fluid iron

Finally Howat Penny lifted Ludowika to her saddle and swung himself up at her side The rain had stopped below the eastern rim of cloud an expanse showed serenely clear Their horses soberly took the rise beyond Shadrach Furnace and merged into the gathering dusk of the forest road A deep tranquillity had succeeded the tempest of Howat s emotions it would not continue he knew already the pressure of immense new difficulties gathered about him but momentarily he ignored them He searched his feelings curiously

The fact that struck him most sharply was that he was utterly without remorse for what had occurred it had been inevitable He experienced none of the fears against which Ludowika had exclaimed He lingered over no self accusations the reproach of adultery He was absolutely unable then to think of Felix Winscombe except as a person generally unconcerned If he repeated silently the term husband

it was without any sense of actuality the satirical individual in the full bottomed wig now absent in Maryland had no importance in the passionate situation that had arisen between Ludowika and himself Felix Winscombe would of course have to be met dealt with but so would a great many other exterior conditions

Ludowika, in her linen mask was enigmatic a figure of mystery A complete silence continued between them at times they ambled with his hand on her body then the inequalities of the road forced them apart The clouds dissolved the sky was immaculate green with dawning stars like dim white flowers A faint odour of the already mouldering year rose from the wet earth Suddenly Ludowika dragged the mask from her face Quivering with intense feeling she cried

I m glad Howat! Howat I m glad!

He contrived to put an arm about her crush her to him for a precarious moment We have had an unforgettable day out of life she continued rapidly that is something It has been different strangely apart from all the rest The rain and that musty little store house and the wonderful iron a memory to hold carry away—

To carry where? he interrupted You must realize that I ll never let you go now I will keep you if we have to go beyond the Endless Mountains I will keep you in the face of any man or opposition created

A wistfulness settled upon her out of which grew a slight hope I am afraid of myself Howat,' she told him all that I have been my life—against me But perhaps here, with you it might be different Perhaps I would be constant Perhaps all the while I have needed this Howat do you think so? Do you think I could forget so much drop the past from me be all new and happy?'

He reassured her only half intent upon the burden of her words He utterly disregarded anything provisional in their position happiness or unhappiness were unconsidered in the overwhelming determination that she should never leave him No remote question of that entered his brain The difficulties were many but he dismissed them with an impatient gesture of his unoccupied hand Gilbert Penny would be heavily censorious he had Howat recognized the moral prejudices of a solid unimaginative blood But lately his father had sunk to a place comparatively insignificant in his thoughts This was partly due to the complete manner in which Isabel Penny had silenced the elder at breakfast His mother Howat gladly felt would give him the sympathy of a wise broad understanding David and Caroline would interpose no serious objection Felix Winscombe remained a virile figure in spite of his years a man of assured position and a bitter will

He determined to speak on the day that Felix Winscombe returned from Annapolis there would be

no concealment of what had occurred and no hypocrisy A decent regret at Winscombe s supreme loss The other would not relinquish Ludowika without a struggle Who would? It was conceivable that he would summon the assistance of the law conceivable but not probable the situation had its centre in a purely personal pride Nothing essential could be won legally A physical encounter was far more likely Howat thought of that coldly He had no chivalrous instinct to offer himself as a sop to conventional honour In any struggle exchange of shots he intended to be victorious He would have the naming of the conditions

It s beautiful here Ludowika broke into his speculations the great forests and Myrtle Forge I can almost picture myself directing servants like your mother getting supplies out of the store and watching the charcoal and iron brought down to the Forge The sound of the hammer has become a part of my dreams And you Howat — I have never before had a feeling like this for a man There s a little fear in it even It must be stronger than the other than Europe I want it to be They could see below them the lighted windows at Myrtle Forge The horses turned unguided into the curving way across the lawn A figure stood obsequiously at the door it was Howat saw with deep automatic revulsion the Italian servant He wondered again impatiently at the persistently unpleasant impression the other made on him Gilbert

Penny was waiting in the hall and Howat told him fully the result of his investigation

His father nodded, satisfied "You are taking hold a great bit better," he was obviously pleased

"We must go over the whole iron situation with the Forsythes It's time you and David stepped forward I am getting bothered by new complications the thing is spreading out so rapidly — steel and a thousand new methods and refinements And the English opposition I'm afraid you'll come into that

Ludowika did not again appear that evening and Howat sat informally before a blazing hearth with his mother Gilbert Penny and Caroline Myrtle had retired with a headache Howat felt pleasantly settled almost middle-aged he smoked a pipe with the deliberate gestures of his father He wondered at the loss of his old restlessness his revolt from just such placid scenes as the present Never he had thought would he be caught bound with insidious affections, desires Howat, a black Penny! He had been subjugated by a force stronger than his rebellious spirit Suddenly, recalling Ludowika's doubt, he wondered if he would be a subject to it always. All the elements of his captivity lay so entirely outside of him beyond his power to measure or comprehend that a feeling of helplessness came over him. He again had the sense of being swept twisting in an irresistible flood But his confusion was dominated by one great assurance — nothing

should deprive him of Ludowika An intoxicating memory invaded him touched every nerve with delight and a tyrannical hunger His fibre seemed to crumble his knees turn to dust Years ago he had been poisoned by berries and limpness almost like this had gone softly, treacherously, through him

VIII

THEY entered into a period of secret contentment and understanding Ludowika displayed a grave interest in the details of the house and iron at Myrtle Forge he explained the processes that resulted in the wrought blooms despatched by tons in the lumbering mule-drawn wagons They explored the farm where she listened approvingly to the changes he proposed making kitchen gardens to be planted the hedges of roses and gravelled paths to be laid — for her She suggested an Italian walk latticed above with a stone seat and was indicating a corner that might be transformed into a semblance of an angle of Versailles when suddenly she stopped and clasped his wrist

No! No!" she exclaimed with surprising energy We'll have no France no court here, but only America only you and myself with no past no memories but just the future " How that was to be realized neither of them considered they avoided all practical issues difficulties They never mentioned Felix Winscombe's name However a long communication came from him for his wife She read it thoughtfully in the drawing room await

ing dinner No one else but Howat was present and he was standing with his hand on her shoulder

Felix hasn t been well she remarked presently For the first time he has spoken to me of his age The Maryland affair drags and that has wearied him

What does he say about returning? Howat bluntly asked

Shortly he hopes that is in another ten days He says there is a good ship the *Lindamira* by the middle of November Howat said *Excellent* Ludowika gazed at him swiftly It will be difficult His face became grim but he made no direct reply A silence fell on the room through which vibrated the blows of the trip hammer at the Forge The day was grey and definitely cold a small cannon stove glowed in the counting house but Ludowika kept mostly to her room She sent him a note by the Italian and Howat eyed the fellow bowing in the doorway A flexibility that seemed entirely without bones His eyes were jet slits his lips shaven and mobile a wig was repulsively saturated with scented grease Yet it was not in actual details that he oppressed Howat but by the vague suggestion of debasing commendations of surreptitious understanding insinuations He seemed absurdly unreal a symbol the intent of which Howat missed he suppressed an insane movement to touch the Italian discover if he was actually before him

He reread Ludowika s note whenever he was not

actually employed in recording until he was obliged to conceal it in the Forge book

Later Abner Forsythe arrived with David and there was a stir of preparing rooms and communication with the farm David's mother was dead and Abner conducted the wedding negotiations with the Pennys I thought it would be the pretty little one he said at the table with a Quaker disregard of small niceties of feeling but Gilbert any girl of yours would be more than the young men of the present deserve It was a difficult conversation for every one but Ludowika and Abner Forsythe A greater ease appeared after supper David and Caroline disappeared in the direction of the clavichord from which sounded some scattered perfunctory measures The two elder men returned over a decanter of French spirits to the inevitable and engrossing subject of iron and the Crown regulations Myrtle sat stiffly before the fireplace with Isabel Penny and Howat moved up and across the room his gaze lying on Ludowika spread in an expanse of orange chiffon and bold silver tracery on the small sofa

She smiled at him once but for the most part she was lost in revery Ludowika had a fan to hold against the fire and her white fingers were playing with its polished black sticks and glazed paper printed with an ornamental bar of music A faint colour stained her cheeks as he watched her and set his heart tumultuously beating He told himself over and over with an unabated sense of wonder

that she was his He longed for the moment when they could discard all pretence and be frankly com pletely together That must happen after Felix Winscombe arrived Meanwhile he was forced to content himself with a look a quick or lingering con tact of fingers the crush of her body against his momentarily in a passage They had returned once to the rock where he had first been intoxicated by her in a strangling wave of emotion he had taken her into his arms but she had broken away The width of the stream and screen of trees had appar ently disconcerted Ludowika and she contrived to make him feel inexcusably young awkward

But usually he dominated her there was a depth to his passion that achieved patience the calmness of unassailable fortitude She gazed at him often with a surprise that bordered on fear again she would delight in his mastery beg him to hold her forever safe against the past He reassured her of his abil ity and determination to accomplish that there was not the shadow of a doubt in his own mind He was more troubled now than formerly but he was eager for the climax to pass impatient to claim his own

As if a dam had been again thrown across the flood of his emotions he felt them mounting grow ing more and more irrepressible He slept in fever ish snatches with gaps in which he stared wide-eyed into the dark trying to realize his coming joy visualizing Ludowika a brilliant apparition of flow

ing silk, on the night He thought of the store house at the Furnace of the rain beating on the roof and Ludowika God, if that old man would only return go leave them! The clouds vanished and left the nights emerald clear the constellations glittered in frosty immensities of silence He stood at the open window with his shoulders bare revelling in the cold air that flowed over him, defying winter death itself The moon waned immutably

David was now at Shadrach Furnace living with the Heydricks and the necessities that brought him to Myrtle Forge were endless He was absolutely happy and Howat watched him with mingled longing and envy His affair darker more tragic in spite of a consummation that must be joyous seemed infinitely more mature Caroline was a nice enough girl but Ludowika was supremely fascinating David amused him

'Caroline is a miracle Of course there are prettier and Mrs Winscombe has more air but none has Caroline's charming manner Of course you have noticed it Even a thick headed brother couldn't miss that We have plans for you too And it's no good your looking glum we'll glum you"

The amusement faded from Howat's countenance and he listened sullenly to the end of the raillery His temper was growing daily more uneven the delight had largely left his reflections His passion had become too insistent for happy conjecturing the visions of Ludowika now only tormented him.

Her eyes were like burning sapphires her warm palms caressed his face he was increasingly gaunt and shadowed Once he gave a note for her to the Italian servant loathing the hand that adroitly cov ered the folded sheet the other s oblique smile but she sent back word that she was suffering from a headache He began to plan so that he would inter cept her in unexpected places She too was pas sionate in her admissions but somehow some one always stumbled toward them or they were sum moned from beyond He began to feel that this was not mere chance but desired deliberately courted by Ludowika Very well he would end it all as it were with a shout when Felix Winscombe came back

When Felix Winscombe came back!

He was too increasingly aware of his mother s scrutiny Howat was certain that Isabel Penny had surmised a part of his feeling for Ludowika He didn t greatly care any one might know he thought contemptuously It had destroyed his sympathetic feeling for his mother the only considerate bond that had existed with his family Unconsciously he placed her on one side of a line the other he d only Ludowika and himself

He explained this to her in a sere reach of the garden It was afternoon the sun low and a haze on the hills Ludowika had on a scarlet wrap curiously vivid against the withered brown aspect of the faded flower stems You and me he re- peated She gazed, without answering at the bar

rier of hills that closed in Myrtle Forge From the thickets came the clear whistling of partridges, intensifying the unbroken tranquillity that surrounded the habitations Howat was suddenly conscious of the pressure of vast, unguessed regions primitive forces illimitable wildernesses It brought uppermost in him a corresponding zest in the sheer spaciousness of the land a feeling always intensified by the thought of England "The Province" he said disjointedly "a place for men Did you see those that followed the road this morning? Perhaps five with their women some pack horses kitchen tins and hide tents The men wore buckskin and furred caps and the women s skirts were sewed leather One was tramping along with a feeding baby Well God knows where they have been how many days they have walked their shoes were in shreds And their faces thin and serious have looked steadily over rifles at death The women too You ll only get them here, in a big country a new —

'They were terrible Ludowika declared savage I was glad when they were by The baby at the woman s great breast' she shuddered at he memory Like animals'

He gazed at her with a slight surprise he had never heard her speak so bitterly He saw her more clearly than ever before as if her words had illuminated her extraordinary delicacy of being had made visible all the infinite refinements of which she was the result He had a recurrence of his sense of her

incongruity here balanced on polished black pat tens against the darkening hills The sun disap peared there was a cool flare of yellow light and a feeling of impending evening The hills were indigo the forest a dimmer gold a wind moved audible in the dry leaves

Ludowika gasped ' It s so — so huge she said all the lonely miles At times I can t bear to think of it A faint dread invaded him Last night when I couldn t sleep a thing howled in the woods And I got thinking of those naked men at the Forge with their eyes rimmed in black and — and — '

He disregarded the publicity of their position and put an arm about her shoulders in an overwhelming impulse to calm and reassure her but she slipped away I ll be all right again she promised but I think it s more cheerful with the candles We ll get your sister to play Belshazzar and pretend we re across the green from St James

A mood darker than any he had lately known set tled over him It was natural for Ludowika to be lonely at first but in a little she would grow to love the wild like himself She must The Province was to be her life He was standing before the fire in the informal chamber beyond the dining room watch ing his mother s vigorous hands deftly engaged in embroidery There was no one present and a sud den totally desperate recklessness possessed him Isabel Penny said

' Mr Winscombe will be here shortly

"I wish it would be to night" he declared She raised her calm gaze with brows arched in inquiry

There is something — he broke off ' She be longs to me he said in a low, harsh voice, and not to that old man

Mrs Penny secured her needle and put the colour ful web aside She was as he had been sure she would be entirely composed admirable Her ques tioning look grew keener I was afraid of that,' she admitted simply ' after the first It is very unpleasant and difficult This is not London, and your father will make no allowances You are not any easier to bend Howat With Mrs Wins combe — she paused I am not certain But there is no doubt about the husband

She belongs to me he reiterated sullenly

There is no need for you to make yourself of fensively clear I know something of details of that kind I told you once that they might mean only a very little to — to certain women I am not pre pared to judge about that But I know you what bitter feeling you are capable of You are a very pure man Howat and for that reason such an occurrence would tear you up and across There is no use in begging you to be cautious diplomatic Mr Winscombe too is very determined he has many advantages — maturity coldness experience He won t spare you, either It s excessively un fortunate

'I'll get it over as quickly as possible I didn't want the thing to happen it wasn't from any choice it hit me like a bullet Nothing else is of the slightest importance I've gone over this again and again I'll tell him and let him try what he can Ludowika's gone from — from the fireworks and fiddles and stinking courts I've got her and by God I'll keep her'

Talk quietly you can't shout yourself into this Are you certain that Mrs Winscombe really find the courts — stinking? I remember at first she stopped Even in the midst of his passion he listened for what revelation she might make but none followed She was silent for a minute They become a habit she said finally love loves become a habit Only men brought up in the same atmosphere can understand At first Felix Winscombe will be infuriated with you for speaking then he will realize more and the trouble will follow Are you certain that you have comprehended? It would be stupid to mistake an episode you would succeed only in making yourself ridiculous

He lifted up both his hands and closed them with a quivering relentless force

Truly Isabel Penny remarked truly I begin to be sorry for her There is something she has yet to learn about men Nothing can be said and that is what your father will not penetrate Howat, I am even a little afraid now That I believe

is unusual for me It's your blackness, like powder The explosion can kill Nothing may be said Life drags us along by the hair'

Her questions about Ludowika joined to the memory of the latter s revulsion from the primitive conditions of the Province and added to the heaviness of his heart He mentally denied his mother s suggestions, drove them from him but they left a faint enduring sting a vague unrest His passion for Ludowika swelled dominated him he forgot everything but his own supreme desire Nothing else stood before its flood all thought of Ludowika s final happiness was lost with the other detritus The tense closing of his hands had symbolized his feeling his intent He held her in a manner as nakedly primitive as the inchoate sexuality of the emotion that had engulfed him

Ludowika did not appear for supper and he was possessed by a misery of vague apprehensions He must know something of her thoughts have a token from her of some feeling like his own and waiting he stopped the Italian on the stairs The latter knew his purpose immediately without a spoken word and he followed Howat s brusque gesture to hi room He hastily wrote a note and the latter brought him back a reply only partly satisfactory with an air of relish For the first time the affair had the hateful appearance of an intrigue like a court adventure It was the Italian servant Howat decided and immediately he recognized why he dis

liked the other — it was becaus he expressed an aspect of slyness that lay over Ludowika and himself He put that from him too but it was like brushing away cobwebs His hunger for Ludowika increased all the while it became more burningly material in satiable and concrete

On the day following she clung to him when op portunity offered with a desperate energy of emo tion You must hold me tighter she told him Her mood rapidly changed and she complained of the eternal pervasive fall of the forge hammer It will drive me mad' she declared almost wildly I can t bear to think of its going on and on year after year list ning to it —' He heard her with sombre eyes She had come to the counting house empty for the moment but for themselves and stood with her countenance shadowed by a frown If the hammer stops he replied waving his hand largely all this the Pennys stop too I m afraid that sound of beating out iron will be always wrought through our lives You will get accustomed to it —

Her expression grew petulant resentful Do you mean that we couldn t perhaps go to England if — if I wanted? He moved closer to her brush ing th circumference of her skirt ' You asked me to hold you to keep you from the past and I am going to do it London is all that you wish to for get it must go completely out of your life never finger you again A faint dread that deepened al

most to antagonism was visible on her countenance I suppose to men talk like that seems a sign of strength of possession but it doesn t impress women, really You see, women give, or else — there is nothing

I had no thought of impressing you ' he said simply 'I only repeated what came into my mind, what I mean It would be a mistake for me to take you to England and make both of us miserable Be side there is more to tend here than I ll ever accom plish' She objected, But other people, work-men will do the actual labour Surely you are not going to keep on with anything so vulgar —" she indicated the office and desks Her features sharp ened with contempt 'I ll not be a clerk,' he told her gravely But I am responsible for a great deal You should understand that for you showed it to me Most of what I am now has been you' He reached out his hands to her in a wave of tender ness but she evaded him She stood irresolute for a moment and then abruptly turned and disappeared

A white rim of new moon grew visible at the edge of dusk and he stood gazing at it before he entered the dwelling A dull unrest had become part of his inner tumult a premonition falling over him like an advancing shadow But above all his vague fears rose the knowledge that he would never let Ludowika go from him that was the root of his being Now she could never leave him It was natural he assured himself again that she should

feel doubts at first everything here was so different from the life she had known and women were variable He would have to understand that learn to accommodate himself to changing surface moods immovable underneath

She had put on for supper he saw a daring dress and her expression was that which he had first noted indifferent slightly scoffing Her shoulders and arms gleamed under fragile gauze her bodice was hardly more than a caress of silk He watched her every movement and got a sort of satisfaction from the knowledge that she grew increasingly disturbed at his unwavering scrutiny His mother s attitude toward Mrs Winscombe had not changed by a shade an inflection she was correctly cordial in her slightly distant manner

In the ebb and flow of the evening Howat was left with Ludowika for a little and he bent over her kissing her sharply She was coldly unresponsive and he kissed her again trying vainly to bring some warmth to her lips She did not avoid him actually bu he felt that something in her essential slipped aside from his caress His emotion changed to a mounting anger You will have to get over this now or later he asserted She said surprisingly ' Felix will be home this week He stood with an arm half raised his head turned as he had been arrested by her period

Well? he demanded stupidly Her tone had been beyond his comprehension Felix she went

on, apparently at random 'is very satisfactory' Something of her intent penetrated his stunned faculties He advanced toward her dark with rage And if he is he replied 'it will do him no good It will do you no good if you think — he broke off from an accession of emotion 'What damned thing are you thinking of?'

The Princess Amelia s stockings ' she answered pertly

You ll never put them on her again, like any dirty chamber maid

Felix the end of this week' she repeated

"I ll kill him Howat whispered if he lifts a hand I ll shoot him through the head This was forced on me some one else responsible can pay" Her chin was up her expression mocking Ridiculous like any cloddish countryman ' She walked deliberately away seated herself in a graceful eddy of pannicred silk

A cold torment succeeded his rage he had the feeling of being hopelessly trapped, stifling in his passion He followed her 'Ludowika this is horrible so soon I am willing to think that I am to blame stupid no experience You will have to be patient with me Naturally everything now — he broke off and wandered to a window holding aside the draperies gazing out into the night The sky was so luminous that the barriers of surrounding hills were printed clearly against starry space The forest swept about in a dark veil nowhere could be

seen a glimpse of habitation He heard the wavering cry of an owl

The Province immense secretive! Paper lanterns strung in parks hid music provocative smiles only playing with the heart! It was tremendously unfortunate Why must they suffer so unreasonably? *Something he was certain had gone wrong it lay* both within them and outside a force diverted a purpose unaccomplished It bent broke them like two twigs they were no more than two bubbles momentarily reflecting the sky on a profound depth A wind stirred oppressed them and they were gone A great pity for Ludowika took its place in his feelings He was sorry for himself Suddenly the rustle of her skirts approached

An infinitely seductive warm arm crept about his neck she abandoned herself to a ruthless embrace ' Its been wonderful Howat and — and it isn t over yet Nothing lasts it s a mistake to demand too much. We must take what we may Perhaps even later — in London No don t interrupt me After all I'm wiser than you are I was swept away for a little Impossibilities I am what I am I was always that inside of me If the longing I told you about had been stronger it and not the court would have made me but it was no more than a glimpse seen from a window a thing far away I d never reach it This now has been the best of me all

He had a mingled sense of the truth and futility of

her words It was as if his passion stood apart from them dominating them lashing him with desire Nothing she might say no necessity nor effort, could free them The uselessness of words smote him She spoke again an urgent flow of dulcet sound against his ear but it was without meaning lost in the drumming of his blood The stir of feet approached and he released her moving to the fireplace It was Caroline She stopped awkwardly advancing a needless explanation of a trivial errand from the doorway and vanished

His position at Myrtle Forge was fast becoming impossible There would be an explosion now at any moment He took the fire tongs and idly rearranged th wood on the hearth The flames blazed more brightly their reflection squirmed over the lacquer frames on the walls gleamed richly on polished black walnut and fell across the Turkey floor carpet It even reach d through the pale candle light and flickered on Ludowika s dull red gown, flowered and clouded with blue She was turned away from him against the window her shoulders drooped in an attitude of dejection The flames died away again

IX

LUDOWIKA S manner toward him became *self possessed even animated and Howat* thought preoccupied She was expectant with a slightly impatient air as if she were looking beyond his shoulder The cause occurred to him in a flash that ignited his anger like a ready charged explosive She was waiting desiring the return of her husband Felix Winscombe she thought would mean — escape He used the word deliberately realizing that that now expressed her attitude toward the Province toward him It made no difference in his feeling for her his determination that nothing should take her from him His power of detachment vanished he became utterly the instrument of his passion

He didn t press upon her small expressions of his emotion somehow without struggle she had made them seem foolish beyond that they were inadequate He was conscious of the approach of a great climax his feeling was above the satisfaction of trivial caresses Soon he told himself soon he would absolutely possess her for as long as they lived Ultimately she must be happy with him He thought the same things in a ceaseless round he

walked almost without sight discharging mechan ically the routine of daily existence answering in evitable queries in a perfunctory, dull voice Myr tle Forge made a distant background of immaterial colours and sounds for the slightly mocking figure of Ludowika

In mid afternoon David arrived with a face stung scarlet by beating wind, and a clatter of hoofs He immediately found Gilbert Penny, and the two men sat together with grave faces lowered voices Howat who had left the counting house at the sound of the hurried approach caught a few words as he drew near the others

a bad attack crumpled him up Coming out from the city now They were talking about Felix Winscombe who it appeared had been as saulted by a knife like pain and was returning to Myrtle Forge Watlow saw no reason why it should be dangerous David continued he thinks perhaps it came from unusual exertions entertain ing A little rest he says He thinks the Wins combes will be able to sail on the *Lindamira* as they planned

Ludowika listened seriously to Gilbert Penny s few temperate words of preparation He has had a pain like that before she told them It always passes away Felix is really very strong in spite of his age He won t ordinarily go to bed but I ll insist on that now simply for rest Felix Wins combe appeared at the supper hour He was helped

out of Abner Forsythe s leather hung chaise and assisted into the house Howat saw him under the hanging lamp in the hall with a painful surprise he realized that he was gazing at the haggard face of an old man Before he had never connected the thought of definite age with Mr Winscombe The man s satirical virility had forbidden any of the patronage unconsciously extended to the aged

A trace of his familiar mocking smile remained but it was tremulous it required Howat saw great effort An involuntary admiration possessed him for the other s unquenchable courage The latter protested vehemently against being led to his room by Ludowika but she ignored his determination to go into supper swept him away with a firm arm about his waist

The house took on the slightly strange and dis ordered aspect of illness voices were grave low in the morning Howat learned that Felix Winscombe had had another vicious attack in the night Dr Watlow arrived and demanded assistance Howat Penny in the room where Ludowika s husband lay exhausted in a bed canopied and draped in gay India silk followed Watlow s actions with a healthy feeling of revulsion The doctor bared Wins combe s spare chest then filled a shallow thick glass with spirits emptying the latter he set fire to the interior of the glass and when the blue flame had expired clapped the cupped interior over the pros trate man s heart There was it seemed little else

that could be done bleeding was judged for the once unexpeditious

An effort at commonplace conversation was main tained at dinner Ludowika openly discussed the arrangements for their return to London Felix Winscombe had rallied from the night his wife said that it was difficult to restrain him The most com fortable provisions she continued, had been made for their passage on the *Lindamira* Howat heard her without resentment He had no wish to contra dict her needlessly even in thought he was immov ably fixed Mr Winscombe s debilitated return had completely upset his intentions An entirely differ ent proceeding would now be demanded but with an identical end What pity he felt for the eld had no power to reach or alter his passion

He returned to the counting house and worked methodically through the afternoon with an increas ing sense of being involved in an irresistible move ment This gave him a feeling almost of tranquil lity from the beginning he had not been responsible In the face of illness the Italian servant proved utterly undependable he cringed stricken with dread from the spectacle of suffering And when late in the day Mr Winscombe partially drugged with opium grew consciously weaker Howat s as sistance was required

Ludowika now remained in the room with her hus band and there was a discreet movement in and out by various members of the household Isabel

Penny remained for an hour Caroline took her place Myrtle fluttered uncertainly in the door way Through the evening Felix Winscombe lay propped on pillows his head covered by a black gros de Naples cap His keen personality waned and revived on his long yellow countenance At one side wigs stood in a row on blocks a brilliant ma genta coat lay in a huddle on a chair At intervals he spoke in a thinner higher voice than customary petulantly uneasy or with a familiar sardonic in flection At the latter Ludowika would grow im mensely cheered She entirely ignored Howat on the occasions when he was in the room He saw her mostly bent over leather boxes into which disap peared her rich store of silk and gold brocades shoes of purple morocco soft white shifts Howat watched her without an emotion visible on his som bre countenance

Occasionally Mr Winscombe s tenuous fingers dipped into a snuff box of black enamel and bril liants and he lifted his hand languidly The man s vitality his sheer determination were extraordi nary Even now he was far from impotence He had Howat had learned completely dominated the Provincial Councils forced a mutual compromise and agreement on them He spoke of still more compli cated affairs awaiting him in England He damned the Italian s white liver and threatened to leave him in America Dr Watlow had been forced to re turn to the city

Through the unaccustomed stir Howat was ceaselessly aware of his feeling for Ludowika he thought of it with a sense of shame but it easily drowned all other considerations He continued to speculate about their future together Whatever his father might conclude about his personal arrangements the elder would see that he was necessary to the future of the Penny iron They might live in one of the outlying stone dwellings at the Forge for the present He was glad that Gilbert Penny that he was rich Ludowika could continue to dress in rare fabrics, to step in elaborate pattens over the common earth That could not help but influence assuage her in the end The Pennys position in the Province too was high the most exclusive assemblies were open to them He regarded his satisfaction in these details with something of Mr Winscombe s bitter humour In the past he had repudiated them with the utmost scorn In the past—dim shapes scenes that appeared to have occurred years *before* but which in reality reached to last month trooped through his mind Youth had vanished like a form dropping behind a hill He looked back it was gone his feet hurried forward into the unguessed future anxiety joined him the scent that was Ludowika accompanied him an illusive figure He reached toward it

He was standing at the foot of the bed where Felix Winscombe lay The latter was restless and complained of pains in his arms reaching down to

his fingers Ludowika bent over him her face stamped with concern She regarded Howat with a new expression — narrowed eyes and a glimmer of flawless teeth a look he had never foreseen there but it was impotent before the thing that was It had however the effect of intensifying his desire his passion for her fragility of silk and flesh He would kiss her hate on her mouth

She sat by the bedside and Howat took a place opposite her Candles burned on a highboy on a table at his back and their auriferou light flowed in about the bedstead The latter was draped from the canopy to the bases of the posts in a bright printing of pheasants and conventional thickets — cobalt and ruby and orange and across a heavy counterpane half drawn up stalked a row of panoplied Indians in clipped zephyr It was a nebulous enclosure with the shadows of the hangings wavering on the coloured wool and cold linen on the long seamed countenance of the prostrate man

A clock in the hall struck slowly — it needed winding — ten blurred notes Felix Winscombe took a sip of water A minute snapp ng sounded from the hearth A window stirred and there was a dry turning of leaves without wind One of the Indians Howat saw had his arm raised flourishing a blade a stupid effigy of savage spleen Beyond the drapery Ludowika s face was dim and white It was like an ineffable May moon Ludowika Penny For the first time Howat thought of her

endowed with his name, and it gave him a deep thrill of delight He repeated it with moving but soundless lips — Ludowika Penny

Her husband lay with his eyes closed, his head bowed forward on his chest as if in sleep At irregular intervals small, involuntary contractions of pain twitched at his mouth At times too he muttered noiselessly Extraordinary Ludowika and Felix Winscombe and himself Howat Penny A world peopled only by them the silence of the room dropped into infinite space bottomless time A sudden dread of such vast emptiness seized Howat he felt that he must say something recreate about them the illusion of safe and familiar spaces and walls It seemed that he was unable to speak a leaden inhibition lay on his power of utterance He made a harsh sound in his throat loud and startling Felix Winscombe raised his head and Ludowika cried faintly Then silence again folded them

Howat fastened his thoughts on trivial and practical affairs — the furnishing of the house where he would take Ludowika what David and himself intended to do with the iron and then his last long talk with his mother She was astonishingly wise she had seen far into Ludowika and himself, but even her vision had stopped short of encompassing the magnitude of his passion she had not realized his *new patience and determination He found himself* counting the gorgeous birds in the bed hangings —

twenty six twenty seven twenty-eight and stopped abruptly

It had grown chilly in the room and Ludowika had an India cashmere shawl about her shoulders The sombre garnets and blues hid the tinsel gaiety of her gown and her bare shoulders She appeared older than he had ever seen her before Her face carefully studied showed no trace of beauty her eyes were heavy her lips dark any efforts of animation were suspended She showed completely the effect of her life in courts and a careless prodigality of hours and emotions Howat seeing all this felt only a fresh accession of his hunger for her she was far more compelling than when romantically viewed as a moon

He sat with his chin propped on a palm she was rigidly upright with her arms at her sides Felix Winscombe moved higher on the pillows His eyes glittered in a head like a modelling in clay his arms stirred ceaselessly with weaving fingers Howat could almost feel Ludowika s hatred striking at him across the bed He smiled at her and she faced him with an expression of stony unresponse He thought luxuriantly of her in his arms with the rain beating on the store house roof he caught the odours of the damp heaped merchandise the distant clamour in the casting shed He had a brutal impulse to lean forward and remind her of what had occurred of the fact that she was his he wanted to fling it

against her present detachment to mock her with it Then he would crush her against his heart *Felix Winscombe raised up on an elbow, distorting* the row of sanguinary Indians

Ludowika moved to the edge of the bed and put a firm graceful arm about him A grey shadow of pain fell on Mr Winscombe s features The silence was absolute He seemed to be waiting in an attitude of mingled dread and resolution He whispered an unintelligible period the pain on his face sharpened and he released himself from Ludowika s support She sank back on her chair, gazing at her husband with wide concerned eyes

Slowly the lines in his face deepened and a fine gleaming sweat started out on his brow His face contorted in a spasm of voiceless suffering and he drew a stiff hand down either arm Howat watched him in a species of strained curiosity with a suspension of breath Something he felt, should be done to relieve the oppression of agony gathering on Felix Winscombe s countenance but a corresponding sense of complete helplessness settled like a leaden coffin about him The other became unrecognizable his face seemed to be set in an unnatural grin His head drew back on a thin corded neck and a faint gasping for air stirred in the shadows Even Howat felt the pain to be unendurable, and Ludowika white as milk had risen to her feet She stood with a hand half raised beneath a fringed corner of the India shawl

It was incredible that the sufferer's agony should increase but it was apparent that it did remorselessly All humanity was obliterated in an excruciating spasm over which streamed some meagre tears Mr Winscombe's arms raised and dropped and suddenly relaxed he slipped down upon the pillows Immediately the torment vanished from his countenance it became peaceful released The familiar mockery of the mouth came back The head slightly turned seemed to regard Ludowika with contentment and interrogation Howat was conscious of a relief almost as marked as that on the face before him He had gripped his hands until they ached The tension in the room too seemed spent He was about to address a reassuring period to Ludowika when at a glimpse of her expression the words died on his lips

He bent over the bed with his hand on a ridged still chest he gazed down at flaccid eyes a dropped chin Felix Winscombe was dead

Howat raised up slowly facing the woman through the draperies She was gazing in an incredulous shocked surprise at the limp prostrate body capped in black gros de Naples A shuddering fear passed over her and then her eyes met those of Howat Penny Even separated from him by the bed she drew away as if from his touch He saw that she had forgotten the dead man in a sharp realization of the portent of the living She glanced about the room in the panic of a trapped

lark an abject fright searching for an escape

He realized that there was none Ludowika now belonged to him absolutely he was as remorseless as the pain that had killed Felix Winscombe Below the automatic sensations of the moment Howat was conscious of utter satisfaction A miracle had given Ludowika to him in the passing of a breath all his difficulty had been ended She was alone with him in a province of forests and iron and stars He would make her forget the gardens of fireworks and scraping violins but forget or not she was his Ludowika Penny

II THE FORGE

X

JASPER PENNY stood at a window of his bedroom his left arm carried in a black silk handkerchief gazing down at the long, low roof of Myrtle Forge built by his great great grandfather Gilbert over a hundred and ten years before It was February and he could hear the ringing blows of axes cutting the ice out of the forebay to liberate the water power for the completion of a forging of iron destined to be rolled into tracks for the slowly lengthening Columbia Steam Railway System It was midday a grey sky held a brighter diffused radiance where the veiled sun hung without warmth and the earth was everywhere frozen granite like He could see beyond the Forge shed heaped charcoal and the black mass seemed no more dead than the ground or bare brittle trees sweeping down and up to where on encircling hills they were lifted sharply against the cloudy monotony

He was ordinarily impervious to the influence of weather the more depressing aspects of nature but now he was conscious of a dejection communicated in part at least he felt by the bleak prospect without Another and infinitely more arresting reason for this feeling had just stirred his thoughts — for

the first time he was conscious of the invidious be ginning weariness of accumulating years He was hardly past forty and he impatiently repudiated the possibility that he was actually declining in fact he had not yet reached the zenith of his capabilities physical or mental yet his broken arm slow in mending the pain had unquestionably depleted him more than a similar accident ten years ago Not only this but during the forced inaction his mind had definitely taken a different cast considerations that had seemed to constitute the main business of existence had lately faded before preoccupations and feelings ignored until now

Jasper Penny saw objectively not so much the surrounding circumstance as his own former acts and emotions detached from his habitual being by hardly more than a month his past was posed before his critical judgment Looked at in this manner his life appeared crowded with surprisingly meaningless gestures and words his sheer youth an incomprehensible revolt A greater part of that had been lately expressed by his mother when he had re turned to Myrtle Forge with an arm broken by a fall in a railroad coach travelling to Philadelphia She had said shaking her head with tightened lips

I warned you plenty against those train bri gades It isn t safe nor sensible with a good horse service convenient But then you have always been a knowing head strong boy and man A black Penny

How she would get along without that last phrase he was at a loss to conjecture From his first consciousness he recalled it now a term of reproach and now extenuation Only a few weeks before she had repeated it in precisely the same tone of mingled admonition and complaint that had greeted his most boyish mishaps He had grown so accustomed to it, not only from Gilda Penny but from every one familiar with the Pennys and their history that it had become part of his automatic entity Jasper — a black Penny

The course of his thoughts turned back to the earliest episodes remembered in that connection to a time in which the especial quality had necessarily freest play Now he characterized it as mere uninformed wildness but he still recalled the tremendous *impatience with which he had met the convenient* enclosure of a practicable organized society Even at Myrtle Forge where — in contrast to dwelling in the confines of a city — he had had a rare amount of actual freedom a feeling of constriction had sent him day after day into the woods hunting or merely idle along the upper reaches of still unsullied streams Yet it had been an especial kind of wildness he owed that recognition to his vanished youth The term generally included champagne parties and the companionship of various but similar ladies of the circus or opera house But nothing of that had then entered into his deep rooted rebellion He had had merely a curious pas

sion for complete independence, an innate turning from street bound affairs and men to the isolation and physical accomplishment of arduous excursions on horses or foot He had then avoided even dreaded women And that instinct he told himself shifting his injured arm to a more comfortable position had been admirably founded

The ax blows ceased from his position he could just see the top of the great wheel that drove the Forge trip hammer and slowly the rim blurred commencing to turn The forebay was open A pennant of black smoke lurid with flaming cinders twisted up in the motionless air The hammer fell once experimentally with a faint jar and a grimy figure shovelled charcoal into a barrow

His mind soon returned to the point where it had been deflected by the movement at the Forge he could even visualize his mature boyhood — a straight arrogant figure black certainly with up sloping brows and an outthrust chin And that he thought not without complacency was not very far from a description of himself at present There were of course the whiskers severely trimmed on his spare face and showing in certain lights a glimmer of silver but he was as upright as comfortably lean now as then He was still capable of prolonged physical exertion It was ridiculous to think of himself as definitely aging Yet he was past forty and the years seemed to go far more swiftly than at twenty-one

Women! The silent pronouncement included the smallest plural possible — only two but it seemed to Jasper Penny that they comprised all the variations the faults and virtues, of their entire sex With a certain characteristic formality propriety he considered his wife first now a year dead He wondered if she had found the orthodox and concrete heaven in the frequent ecstatic contemplation of which so much of her life had been spent It had been that fine superiority to the material that had first attracted him to her a quality of shining enthusiasm of reflected inspiration from a vision however trite of eternal hymning and it had been that same essence which finally held them apart through the greater number of their married years Phebe s health slowly ebbing had drawn her farther and farther from the known world in general and the affairs and being of her husband in particular her last strength had gone in the hysteria of protracted religious emotion during which she had become scarcely more to Jasper Penny than an attenuated rapt invalid lingering in his house

Her pale still presence was usurped by a far different animated and colourful figure He thought of Essie Scofield of all that she paramountly held and expressed with a reluctance that had lately almost within the past week grown to resemble resentment if not actual irritation Yet however casting back through the years in his present remoteness he was able to recreate her and

his emotions as they had first irresistibly moved together The absolute opposite of Phebe already withdrawing into her religious incorporeal region Essie Scofield had immediately swept him into the whirlpool of her vivid physical personality Before her the memory of his wife faded into insignificance But there was no mere retrospect in the considering of Essie very much alive she presented outside the Penny iron the one serious preoccupation complication, of his future

At the time when he had first admitted welcomed her claim on him he had felt a sudden energy in which he had recognized a play of the traits of a black Penny Here was a satisfactory if necessarily private exercise of his inborn contempt for the evident hypocrisy the cowardice of perfunctory inhibitions and safe morals That however had been speedily lost in his rocketing passion flaring out of a quiet continence into giddy spaces of unrestraint Essie after a momentary surrender had attempted retreat expressing a doubt of the durability of their feeling she had in fact made it painfully clear that she wished to escape from the uncomfortable volume of his fervour but he had overborne her caution — her wisdom he now expressed it

That more than anything else brought before him the undeniable passage of time the fact that he was rapidly accomplishing middle age — the total extinguishing of an emotion which he had

felt must outlast life It had gone and with it his youth Of course he had recognized that he was no longer thirty he had been well aware of his years but only during th last few weeks had there been the slight perceptible dragging down On the black walnut dressing stand past the window lay a letter he had received from Essie that morning it contained her usual appeal for an additional sum of money — he gave her formally six thousand dollars a year and the manner of the demand for the necessities of their daughter showed his sharpened perceptions that she had never really experienced the blindness of a generous emotion Eunice the child was incontrovertible proof of that — no more than an additional lever for her to swing

His face darkened and he moved his shoulder impatiently as if to throw off a burden grown unendurable But it was fastened immovably — his responsibility was as baldly apparent as the February noon its greyness now blotted by a wind driven metallic shift of snow

He had been criminally negligent of Eunice This realization was accompanied by no corresponding warmth of parenthood there was no quickening of blood at the thought of his daughter but only a newborn condemnation of his neglected proper pride He had thoughtlessly descended to a singularly low level of conduct And it must abruptly terminate Jasper Penny had not seen Eunice for

seven nine months he would remedy this at once supervise advantages, a proper place for her Afterward Essie and himself could make a mutually satisfactory agreement

XI

THROUGHOUT an excellent dinner terrapin and bass wild turkey with oysters and fruit preserved in white brandy he maintained a sombre silence His mother on the right her sister opposite — Phebe s place seemed scarcely emptier than when she had actually occupied it — held an intermittent verbal exchange patently keyed to Jasper Penny s mood They were women with yellow white lace-capped hair blanched eye brows and lashes and small quick eyes on hardy reddened faces Gilda Penny was slightly the larger more definite Amity Merken had a timid almost furtive expression in the opulence of the Penny establishment while Gilda was complacent but otherwise the two women were identical Their dresses were largely similar — Amity s a dun Gilda Penny s grey moire silk high with a tight lace collar and band of jet trimming from shoulder to waist there spreading over crinoline to the floor Lace fell about their square capable hands and Gilda wore broad locked bracelets checked in black and gold

Sherry in blue cut decanters stoppered with gilt gave place to port An epergne of glass and bur

nished ormolu in the form of suporting oak leaves, with numerous sockets for candles was set filled with fruit in the centre of the table silver lustre plates were laid but Jasper Penny heedlessly fingered the stem of a wine glass He said suddenly " I m going to the city this afternoon

Is it safe yet? his mother queried doubtfully Hadn t you better wait till to morrow when you can drive easily or without stopping at a tavern?

He looked up impatiently I shall go by the railroad he stated decisively Can't you understand that with the future of iron almost dependent on steam it is the commonest foresight for me to patronize such customers as the Columbia Railway! I have no intention of adding to the ignorant prejudice against improved methods of travelling

There s your arm she insisted with spirit

An untried engine The Hecla works along smoothly at twenty miles an hour Amity cast a glance of swift appeal at her sister but Gilda Penny persisted Ungodly was the term she selected Jasper ignored her He had decided to straighten the tangled affair of Eunice at once he would see Essie that evening arrive at an understanding about the child s future It would be even more difficult to terminate his connection with Essie herself That he now recognised was his main desire The affair had actually died before Phebe but its onerous consequences remained blighting the future

The future! It was that he now discovered

which occupied him rather than the past A new need had become apparent a restless desire analogous to the urge of seeking youth Jasper Penny was aware of a great dissatisfaction a vast emptiness in his existence he had a feeling of waste growing out of the sense of hurrying years Somehow ob scurely he had been cheated He almost envied the commonality of men not like himself black Pennys impatient of assuaging relationships and beliefs Yet this too turned into another phase of his in heritance — his need was not material concrete it had no worldly graspable implications and his gen eral contempt was not less but greater He wished to bring a final justification to his isolation rather than lose himself in the wide undistinguished surge of living

You ll stop at the Jannans? his mother queried

I think not probably Sanderson s Hotel Stephen is giving a ball to night for Graham and his wife I have some important transactions Not an echo of his affair with Essie Scofield had he knew penetrated to Myrtle Forge It was a most fortunate accident The vulgarity consequent upon discovery would have been unbearable Stephen Jannan his cousin a lawyer of wide city connec tions must have learned something of the truth but Stephen properly had said nothing a comfortable obscurity had hid him from gabbled scandal Now soon it would all be over Unconsciously he drew

a deeper breath of relief of prospective freedom

The Hecla a wooden barrelled engine with a tall hinged stack, drew its brigade of canary coloured chariot cars forward with a rapid bumping over in equal rails Jasper Penny s seat number nineteen was fortunately in the centre close by the stove, where a warmth hung that failed to reach to the doors Lost in speculation the journey was both long and vague Twilight deepened within the car and two flickering candles were lit at either end their pallid light serving only to cast thin, climbing shadows over the rocking box like interior At irregular intervals the train stopped with a succession of subsiding crashes and started again at the blowing of a horn passengers would leave or enter or it would prove to be merely a halt to take on cut and piled wood fuel for the engine

Finally the train brigade reached the inclined plane leading to the river and city the engine was detached and the cars fastened to a hemp cable were lowered spasmodically to where a team of mules drew them through a gloomy covered bridge echoing to the slow hoof falls and creaking of loose planks Jasper Penny fastened the elaborate frogs of his heavily furred overcoat over his injured arm and with a florid bandanna wiped the cinders from his silk hat

The coaches rolled into the station shed where he changed taking a swaying Mulberry Street omnibus to Fourth and Sanderson s Hotel It was a

towering square structure of five stories with a columned white portico and high divided steps The clerk greeting him with a precise familiar deference directed him to a select suite with a private parlour a sombre chamber of red plush dark walls and thickly draped long windows There he sat grimly contemplating a distasteful prospect He knew the casual ill prepared dinners presided over by Essie the covertly insolent man servant and an overpowering reluctance came upon him to sit again at her table But the confusion of the hotel ordinary repelled him too he had seen in passing a number of men who would endeavour to force his opinion on the specie situation or speculation in canals He rose and pulled sharply at the tasselled bell rope ordering grilled pheasant anchovy toast and champagne to be served where he sat

Jasper Penny ate slowly partly distracted by the market reports in the *U S Ga ette* Ninety two and a half had been offered for Schuylkill Navigation only fifteen for the West Chester Railroad but Philadelphia and Trenton had gone to ninety eight while a three and a half dividend had been declared on the French Town Turnpike and Railway Company He was annoyed afre h by the persistent refusal of the Government to award the mail to the Reading Steam System His thoughts returned to Eunice his daughter the coming scene — it would at least be that — with Essie Scofield

It was but a short distance from the hotel to

where Essie lived, over Fourth Street to Cherry and almost immediately he turned by the three story brick dwelling at the corner and was at her door The servant in an untidy white jacket, stood stupidly blocking the narrow hall until Jasper Penny with an angry impatience waved him aside There were other silk hats and coats and a woman's fringed wrap on the stand where he left his stick and outer garments and from above came a peal of mingled laughter The presence of others now, was singularly inopportune it would be no good waiting for their departure — here such gatherings almost invariably drew out until dawn and he abruptly decided that after a short interval he would give Essie to understand that he wished to talk to her privately

A young woman with a chalk white face and oleaginous bandeaux of dead black hair in scarlet and green tartan over an extravagant crinoline was seated on a sofa between two men each with an arm about her waist and wine glasses elevated in their free hands Essie was facing them from a circular floor hassock in a blue satin informal robe over mussed cambric ruffles heelless nonchalants and her hair elaborately dressed with roses, white ribbons and a short ostrich feather Her body at once slim and full was consciously seductive and her face slightly swollen and pasty in the shadows bore the same heedless unrestraint Her dark widely-opened eyes an insignificant nose and shortly curved scarlet lips held almost the fixed painted

impudence of a cynically debased doll She turned and surveyed Jasper Penny with a petulant silent inquiry and whatever gaiety was in progress abruptly terminated as he advanced into the room

You never let me know you d be here Essie complained but I suppose I ought to be glad to see you anyway — after four months without a line Jasper Mr Daniel Culser The younger of the men on the sofa a stolidly handsome individual with hard blue eyes rose with an over emphasized composure Mr Penny extremely pleased Jasper Penny was irritated by the other s instant identification and he nodded bluntly Lambert Babb and Myrtilla Lewis Essie continued indifferently Babb an individual of inscrutable age with ashen whiskers and a blinking weak vision in a silvery face was audibly delighted Myrtilla Lewis smiled professionally over her expanse of bewildering silk plaid Wine in the cooler Essie added and Daniel Culser moved to where a silver bucket reposed by a tray of glasses and broken sugared rusks Jasper Penny refused the offered drink and found a chair apart from the others A moody silence enveloped him which he found impossible to break and an increasing uneasiness spread over the room

Well Essie Scofield commanded say something You look as black as an Egyptian What ll my friends think of you? I suppose it doesn t matter any more what it is to me but you might play at being polite

Don't chip at a man like that," Myrtilla advised. "Mr Penny has a right to talk or not." She smiled more warmly at him and he saw that she had had too much champagne. The room reeked with the thin acrid odour of the wine and a sickly perfume of vanilla essence. Essie as usual had a glass of her favourite drink — orange juice and French brandy — on the floor beside her, the brandy bottle and fresh oranges conveniently near. His repulsion for her deepened until it seemed as if actual fingers were *compressing* his throat, stopping his breath. He wondered suddenly how far he was responsible for her possible degeneration. But he had not been the first; her admission of that fact had in the beginning attracted him to an uncommon frankness in her peculiar make-up. He was willing to assume his fault, to pay for it whatever payment was possible, and escape. Not only from her but from all that she embodied; from himself — what he had been — as much as anything else.

'You are an Ironmaster,' Mr Babb finally announced, "in fact one of our greatest manufacturers. Now Mr Penny, what is your personal opinion of engine as against the public coach? Will the railroad survive the experimental stage and are such gentlemen as yourself behind it?"

'I saw in the *Ledger* some days back,' Daniel Culser added, 'that your arm had been broken travelling by steam."

One had nothing to do with the other Jasper stated tersely ignoring Babb s query but was entirely my own fault The conversation lagged painfully again during which Essie skilfully compounded another mixture of spirits and thick yellow juice She grew sullen with resentment at Jasper Penny s attitude and exchanged enigmatic glances with Culser The liquor brought a quick flush to her slightly pendulous cheeks and she was enveloped in an increasing bravado Penny s a solemn old boy she announced generally Lambert Babb attempted to embrace Myrtilla but her gaze on the newcomer she pushed him away You got to be a *gentleman with me she proclaimed with a* patently unsteady dignity My grandfather was a French noble

What I d like to know Essie remarked is what s his granddaughter?

Better n you! Myrtilla heatedly asserted one who d appreciate a real man and not be playing about private with a tailor s dummy Daniel Culser s face grew noticeably pinker I m going Myrtilla continued rising Mr Penny I d be happy to meet you under more social conditions Here I cannot remain for — for reasons I might be tempted to — Mr Babb caught her arm under his and at an imperious gesture from Essie piloted her from the room Culser rose

Don t go Dan Essie Scofield told him defiantly But Jasper Penny maintained a silence that forced

the younger man to make a stiff exit 'Well, Essie demanded flinging herself on the deserted sofa now you've spoiled my evening Why did you come at all if you couldn't behave genteel?'

Where exactly is Eunice? he asked abruptly She glanced at him with an instant masking of her resentment 'I've told you a hundred times — in the house of a very respectable clergyman My letter was clear enough she's had bronchitis and there's the doctor and —

Just where is Eunice?' he repeated interrupting her aggrieved recital

Where I put her' her voice grew shrill 'You haven't asked to see her for near a year, you haven't even pretended an interest in — in your own daughter I've done the best I could you know I don't like children around but I have attended to as much of my duty as you Now you come out and insist on being unpleasant all in an hour Why didn't you write? I'd had her here for you Come back in two or three days'

To-morrow he replied 'I am going to see her in the morning

You just ain't. I did the best I knew but if it isn't all roses you'll blame everything on me I will have Eunice fetched —

Where is she? he asked still again wearily Every instinct revolted against the degradation into which he had blindly walked His youth had betrayed him involving him practically a different

man in a payment which he realized had but com menced To escape He had first thought of that with the unconscious conviction that the mere wish carried its fulfilment In fact it would be im mensely difficult a man he saw could not sever him self so casually from the past it reached without visible demarcation into the present the future All was a piece one with another and Essie Sco field was drawn in a vivid thread through the en tire fabric of his being

Yet the need the longing forward so newly come into his consciousness persisted grew — it had be come the predominate design of his weaving Through this he recognized a reassertion of his pride the rigid pride of a black Penny which in the years immediately past had been overwhelmed by a tem porary inner confusion Beyond forty men re turned to their inheritance their blood this fact echoed vaguely among his memories of things heard and he felt in himself its measure of truth His distaste for a largely muddled pandering society for men huddled he thought like domestic animals returned in choking wave In the maculate atmos phere of flat wine and stale cologne he had a sharp recurrence of the scent of pines lifting warmly in sunny space

He produced a morocco bound note book a gold pencil and with the latter poised directed a close interrogation at Essie Her face flushed with an ungovernable anger and she pressed a hand over

her labouring heart ' Get her then out Fourth Street Camden the Reverend Mr Needles But afterwards don t come complaining to me You ought to have seen to her you ve got the money, the influence And you have done nothing beyond some stinking dollars wouldn't even name her Eunice Scofield a child without —

All that she had said was absolutely true just

I suppose you ll even think I didn't give her the sums you sent that damned Needles has been bleed ing me suspects something ' She stopped from a lack of breath her darkened face was purplish in the shadows I haven t been well either — a fierce pain here in my heart

It was the brandy he told her she should leave the city late wine parties go back into the coun try ' Go back she echoed bitterly Where? How? ' He winced — the past reaching inex orably into the future Jasper Penny made no at tempt to ignore forget his responsibility he ad mitted it to her but at the same time the tyrannical hunger increased within him — the mingled desire for fresh paths and the nostalgia of the old freedom of spirit But life that had made him had in the same degree created Essie neither had been the re sult of the other they had been swept together descended blindly in company submerged in the passion that he had thought must last forever, but which had burned to ashes to nothing more than a vague sense of putrefaction in life

Thank you he said formally putting away the note book Something of course, must be done but what I can only say after I have seen Eunice I am undoubtedly more to blame than yourself

I suppose in this holy strain you ll end by giving her all and me nothing

what you are getting as long as you live?

That s little enough when I hear how much you have what all that iron is bringing you Why you could let me have twenty thirty thousand and never know it

If you are unable to get on that too will be rectified

You are really not a bad old thing Jasper she pronounced mollified At one time — do you re member? — you said if ever the chance came you would marry me Ah you needn t fear I wouldn t have you with all your iron gold I — she stopped abruptly uneasily Not a bad old thing she repeated moving to secure a half full glass

Why do you call me old? he asked curiously

I hadn t thought of it before she admitted but this evening you looked so solemn and there is grey in your hair that all at once you seemed like an old gentleman Now Dan Culser she hesitated and then swept on he s what you d name young *At Daniel Culser s age* he told himself *he Jasper* Penny could have walked the other blind and now Essie Scofield was calling him old she had noticed the grey in his hair He rose to go and she came

close to him a clinging soft thing of flesh faintly reeking with brandy I have a great deal to pay where money goes I don t know even a little would be a help He left some gold in her hand thankful to purchase at that slight price a momentary release

Outside Cherry Street was blackly cold a gas lamp at the corner shed a watery contracted illumination He made his way back toward the hotel but a sudden reluctance to mount to his lonely chambers possessed him Before the glimmering marble façade he took out his watch a pale gold efflorescence in the gloom and rang the hour in minute, clear notes The third quarter past ten He recalled the ball but then commencing at Stephen Jannan s there it would be indescribably gay a house flooded with the music of quadrilles light polite chatter and he determined to proceed and have a cigar with Stephen

He walked briskly up Mulberry Street to Sixth and there turned to the left Jasper Penny soon passed the shrouded silence of Independence Square with the new Corinthian doorway of the State House showing vaguely through the irregularly grouped ailanthus trees Beyond the brick wall with its marble coping and high iron fence reached on the opposite side to the Jannan corner The length of the brick dwelling with white arched windows and coursings faced the vague emptiness of Washington Square closed for the winter

Inside the hall was bright and filled with the pungent warmth of fat hearth coal A servant with a phrase of recognition directed him above to a room burdened with masculine greatcoats and silk hats There an attendant told him that Mr Jan nan was below Jasper Penny had no intention of becoming a participant in the ball but neither did he propose to linger among wraps listening to the supercilious chatter of young men in the extreme mode of bright blue coats painfully tight black trousers with varnished pumps and expanses of ankle in grey silk One inspecting him through an eye glass on a woven hair guard expressed a pointed surprise at Jasper Penny s informal garb Chris toval! he ejaculated It approaches an insult to the da da darlings Another commenced to sing a popular minstrel air

Blink — a — ho — d nk! Ah! Ho!
Roley Bol y — Good morning Ladies Il!

Jasper Penny abruptly descended to a small room used for smoking Young men he thought impa tiently could no longer even curse respectably They lisped like females at an embroidery frame When he was young younger he corrected himself he could have outdrunk outridden His train of thought was abruptly terminated by a group un expectedly occupying the smoking room He saw Stephen Jannan his wife Liza the newly married young Jannans and a strange woman in glace mus

hın and a black Spanısh lace shawl about her shoul ders Stephen greeted hım cordıally 'Jasper, just at the moment for a waltz with — with Susan' The stranger blushed paınfully made an ınvolun tary movement backward and Lıza Jannan admon ıshed her husband Do you know Mıss Brundon, Jasper? she asked

Jasper Penny bowed and Miss Brundon with an evident effort smiled her shy blue eyes held reso lutely on his countenance She at once slipped into the background talking in a low, clear voice to Graham Jannan s wife while the older men envel oped themselves in a fragrant veil of cigars 'Come Mary Susan Mrs Jannan directed out of this horrid masculine odour' Accompanied by her son the women left and Stephen turned to his cousin 'Thought, of course you knew Susan Brundon he remarked A school mistress, but superior and a lady Has a place on Spruce Street by Raspberry Alley for select younger girls unique idea and very successful I believe

Jasper Penny said comfortably "Humm!" The other continued I want Graham to get out to Shadrach Furnace as soon as may be That old stone house the foremen have occupied is nearly fixed for him I am very well content Jasper to have him in the iron trade with you practically at its head No deliberate favours remember and I have told him to look for nothing But, at the same time — you comprehend folly not to push the boy

on fast as possible No reason for us all to go through with the hardships of the first Gilbert and his times Must have been fatiguing the wilderness and English troubles and all that

Splendid I should say Jasper Penny replied He repeated satirically the conversation he had heard above 'Makes me ill You will remember there was a Howat son of our original settler — now he must have been a lad' Married some widow or other wild at first but made iron in the end

A black Penny Jasper resembled you Person ally I like it better now Jasper Penny surveyed with approbation Stephen s full handsome presence Jannan was a successful a big man Well so was he too But he thought with keen longing of the time when he was twenty one and free free to roam self sufficient He thought of that Howat Penny of which they had spoken black as he was black in the family tradition he had seen Hesselius s por trait of the other and but for the tied hair and continental buff it might have been a replica of himself It was curious — that dark strain of Welsh blood cropping out undiminished concrete after generations The one to hold it before Howat had been burned in Mary s time in the sixteenth century dead almost three hundred years Jasper had a sudden vivid sense of familiarity with the Howat who had married some widow or other His mind returned to his own peculiar problem to Essie Scofield to the burden with which he had encumbered

himself, the payment that faced him for — for his sh er youth He said abruptly belated

' You fit the present formal ease of society, Stephen you like it and it likes you In a super ficial way I have done well enough, but under neath — his voice sank into silence A profound familiar dejection seized him incongruously he thought of Miss Brundon s delicate shrinking from the mere contact of the amenities of speech Super sensitive I must go he announced and refused Stephen Jannan s invitation for the night

Stay for some supper anyhow' the other in sisted and a hand on his arm, led him past the doors open upon the dancing

Chandeliers great coruscating pendants of glass prisms and candles glittered above the expanse of whirling crinoline and blue coats vermilion turbans gilt feathers and flowered hair The light fell on shoulders as white and elegantly sloping as alabaster vases draped in rose and citron in blanched illusion frosted and looped with silver on bouquets of camellias swinging from jewelled chains against ruffled and belled skirts swaying about the revealed symmetry of lacy silk stockings and fragile slippers Ah Jasper Stephen Jannan said in our time what! Do you remember your first Wellington boots? The gambling room and veranda at Saratoga? Tender eyes old boy and little tapering hands' Jasper Penny replied It seems my hair is grey Silence fell on them as they

entered the dining room A long table was burdened with elaborate pagodas of spun barley sugar topped with sprigs of orange blossom the moulded creams of a Charlotte Polonaise champagne jelly valanced with lemon peel pyramids of glazed fruits on lacquered plates with faintly iridescent Belleek and fluted glass and ormolu and everywhere the pale multitudinous flames of candles and the fuller radiance of astral lamps hung with lustres Jasper Penny idly tore open a bon bon wrapped in a vers on fringed paper

> V en V ns! a ge du c l je t a me! je t aime!
> Et te le d e ici c est l bonheur supreme

Love and the great hour of life! He had missed both one perhaps with the other His marriage to Phebe except for a brief flare at the beginning had been as empty as the affair with Essie Scofield God how hollow living seemed! He had missed something or else existence was an ugly deception the false lure of an incomprehensible jest The music beat in faint mocking waves on his hearing the lights of the supper shone in the gold bubbles of his wine glass He drained it hurriedly Outside the night ly ng cold on deserted squares blurred with gas lamps was like a vain death after the idle frivolity of Stephen Jannan s ball *In an instant* in the shutting of a door the blackness had claimed him the gaiety of warm flesh and laughter vanished *Death and he had literally nothing in his*

hands nothing in his heart A duty, Eunice remained The sound of his footfalls on the bricks thrown back from blank walls resembled the embodied stealthy following of the injustice he had wrought

XII

THE following morning he made his way past the continuous produce arcade that held the centre of Market Street to the Camden Ferry At the river the fish stall with its circular green roof and cornucopias reached almost to the gloomy ferry house with its heavy odour of wet wood The boat clattered through broken ice by a trim packet ship the *Susquehanna* and into the narrow canal through Windmill Island Camden was a depressing region of low marshy land its streets unpaved and without gas the gutters full of frozen stagnant water He inquired the way to the Reverend Mr Needles passed a brick meeting house and turning into Fourth Street isolated frame dwellings coming at last to a dingy wooden house with broken panes in the upper windows and a collapsing veranda at the edge of a blackened skeleton wood

A tall gaunt woman in a ravelled worsted shawl answered his summons and informed him interrupted by a prolonged coughing that Mr Needles was away on circuit I came for a child staying with you' Jasper Penny explained shortly suppressing an involuntary repulsion at the degraded surroundings She s not well the woman replied

with instant suspicion I don t just like to let a chancy person see her He discarded all subter fuge I am her father he stated The other shifted to a whining self-defence And her in this sink! she exclaimed gazing at Jasper Penny s furred coat his glossy hat and gloves and ebony cane

I did all for her I could considering the small money I was promised and then half the time I didn t get that neither The lady owes for three weeks right now I suppose you ll have to come in she concluded grudgingly They entered a dark hall clay cold Beyond in a slovenly kitchen hardly warmer he found Eunice his daughter a curiously sluggish child with a pinched hueless face and a meagre body in a man s worn flannel shirt and ragged skirt and stockings

Here s your father Mrs Needles ejaculated Eunice stood in the middle of the bare floor star ing with pallid open mouth at the imposing figure of the man She said nothing and Jasper Penny found her silence more accusing than a shrill tor rent of reproach She s kind of heavy like Mrs Needles explained I have come to take you away Jasper Penny said Then turning to the woman Are those all the clothes she has? She grew duskily red There are some others about but I don t just know where and then she spoils them so fast

That s a lie the child announced with a faint

patch of colour on either thin cheek Mr Needles sold them The man decided to ignore such issues *his sole wish now was to take Eunice away as speed ily as possible* Well " he directed impatiently get a shawl something to wrap her in He re gretted vainly that he had not come for the child in a carriage He paid without a question what the woman said was owing and with Eunice folded in a ragged plaid prepared to depart I gue s the child decided in a strangely mature voice we d better take my medicine She turned toward a mantel Mrs Needles made a quick movement in the same direction but the mall shape was before her Jasper Penny took a bottle from the diminutive cold hand The label had been obliterated but impelled by a distrustful curiosity he took out the cork

Laudanum!

He was at the point of an indignant condemna tion when the words perished without utterance — *not the haggard woman before him but himself* Jasper Penny was entirely guilty He in reality had given the drug to his daughter placed her in this sorry and bitter poverty Come Eunice he said taking her by the hand his face grey and stony

Once more in the city he walked with the child to the ferry and foot of Chestnut Street where they found places in The Reaper a stage brightly painted with snowy ships and drawn by four sorrel horses His first concern was to purchase proper clothes for

his daughter then he would face the problem of her happier disposal They passed the columned façade of the Philadelphia Bank the Custom House with its wide steps set back from the street hedged dwellings and the United States Hotel to Independence Square and Sixth Street where he lifted the child from the stage They stopped before an entrance between bowed windows which had above it the sign The Misses Dunlop Millinery

Jasper Penny had had no idea that it would be so difficult to procure clothes for a girl of seven At first he was told that the necessary garments could not be furnished when discussion revealed the fact that a nearly complete diminutive wardrobe especially ordered from Paris and neglected by the customer was to be had In a surprisingly short while a sentimental saleswoman had apparelled Eunice in black velvet with rows of small bows and gold buckles and a lace collar cambric pantaloon ruffles swinging about her ankles a quilted pink satin bonnet tied like those of her elders with a bow under her right cheek and a muff and tippet of ermine Other articles — a frock of rose gros de chine with a flounced skirt a drab velvet bonnet turned in green smocked silk and sheer underthings — he ordered delivered at Sanderson s Hotel

The effect of what laudanum Eunice had taken faded and her lethargy was replaced by an equally still incredulous amazement She followed Jasper Penny about with the mechanical rigidity of a minute

sleepwalker They went into a jewelry store beyond with a square low bow window and white trimming where he purchased a ring with a ruby and small gold bracelets with locks and chains His restless desire was to clothe Eunice in money to overwhelm her with gifts yet although an evident delight struggled through her stupefaction he failed to get from the expenditure the release he sought A leaden sense of blood guiltiness persisted in him At Parkinson s the confectioner opposite the State House he bought her syllabubs a frozen rose cordial and black cake On leaving he paused at the marble steps with a lantern on either side and awning drawn out over the pavement considering the next move It should be toys — a German doll slate and coloured crayons and jumping figures Then he took her back to his rooms at the Hotel

Sitting in a stiff crimson chair opposite him the doll clasped in straining fingers and a flush of excitement on her sharp features she presented an enormous difficulty What justly was he to do with her? How could he provide for a reasonable happiness a healthy normal existence? He decided coldly that he would prevent Essie Scofield s influence from ever touching the child again Essie he knew was utterly without any warmth of motherhood She had solely and callously used their daughter to extort money from him But he admitted to himself neither had he any feeling of parentage for the small lonely figure before him

nothing but a burning self accusation a lacerated pride His act proceeded entirely from his head in place of his heart For that very reason Jasper Penny thought he could give his daughter a greater measure of security He would see Stephen Jannan to morrow and with the lawyer s assistance get complete control of Eunice s future He must alter his will

None of this however assisted in solving the actual immediate necessity There was certainly Myrtle Forge his mother however she might silently suffer protest would ultimately accede in his wishes But it was a dreary place for a child with only the companionship of old women He was for the greater part away in the interest of his widely scattered activities forges furnaces nail factories and rolling mills

He felt in anticipation the censure of the Penny connections that would rise like a wall and shut Eunice from the companionship of the other children of the family embittering her at what he had somewhere heard described as the formative period of growth His home he decided for the present at least was an undesirable place for his daughter

It was he discovered past two and he remorsefully summoned a servant He gazed with bewilderment at the list of dinner dishes tended him bear s meat he felt canvas back duck or terrapin was not a diet proper to seven but he solved the perplexity by ordering snipe rolled and sugared cakes filled

with whipped cream and preserved strawberries and a deep apple pandowdy After this and a block of nougat Eunice discovered herself to be sleepy As she lay with tossed arms and pale streaming hair under the feather coverlet of a great hotel bed he saw with a sharp uneasiness that in a subtle but unmistakable accent, she resembled her mother Essie Scofield

XIII

HIS thoughts darkened with the falling day he supposed them to be solely addressed to the problem of Eunice but in reality, they constantly evaded his will following countless trivialities and returned to his own peculiar need He made some small changes of dress for the evening replacing brown with glazed black boots and struggled with one hand through the ordeal of tying a formal neckcloth He had purposely left behind his negro servant as a possible source of unguarded chatter When Jasper Penny had finished he went in to Eunice and found her awake The new clothes lay in their open boxes and lighting candles he wondered if he had better have some one in to assist her Can you fix yourself up in these? ' he asked, indicating the purchases

Oh yes she as ured him gravely ' that is except the very backest buttons She stood by the folded piles of shirred muslin the elaborate velvets and silks and ribbons obviously at a loss before such an unparalleled choice and he was once more disturbed by the attenuation of her small body But that could be soon remedied she had suffered other far greater irremedial, oppressions her very birth

had confronted her in the puritanical self righteous ness of his world with an almost insuperable barrier to happiness Still back of that, even before the birth of himself and Essie Scofield back back in the unguessed past Eunice had been shaped condemned Her fate had only culminated in his own unbalanced passion in a desire that had blinded him like a flash of ignited powder leaving him with a sense of utter void of inexplicable need For what? he demanded unconsciously and bitterly aloud

Eunice startled dropped the garment in her hands She gazed at him with a shrinking dread

Come he told her gently ' that will be very pretty and don t you think the velvet bonnet with green? After supper he questioned her What time do you usually go to bed? She answered promptly When it got too cold to stay up at Mr Needles but I wouldn t know here'

We might go to the Circus he suggested half doubtful of the propriety of such a course How ever they went She clung tightly to his sleeve be fore the illuminated high pillared façade of Welches Circus where Jasper took seats in a box Eunice was breathless before the gleaming white and gold of the interior the fabulous glittering chandelier the crimson draperies and great curtain with its equestrienne on a curvetting steed The orchestra with a blare of trombones announced the raising of the curtain and appearance of Mr John Mays the celebrated clown He was followed by Chinese

sports the Vision of Cupid and Zephyr, and the songs the programme stated of Lowrie and Williams These gentlemen in superb yellow satin emphasized harmoniously the fact that

> And joy is but a flower
> Th l e rt with so row meeting
> Will wither neath its power

Jasper Penny wondered abstractedly what was to be done with the tense excitable child at his side? A voice from the wings announced Mouse and Harebell the Lilliputian ponies with Infant Jockies the smallest schooled racers in existence' And the word schooled recalled to him the diffident woman he had met at Stephen Jannan s, the night before Miss Brundon A place for the education of younger girls He could send Eunice there for the present at any rate and decide later upon her ultimate situation Miss Brundon had a sensitive yes distinctly a fine face Her school he remembered was at Raspberry Alley far out Spruce Street close to Tenth He drew a deep breath of relief at this bridging of the immediate complications the child presented

The next morning again in the Reaper coach they rolled west over Chestnut Street past a theatre with elevated statues of Comedy and Tragedy the Arcade with its outside stairs mounting across the front stone mansions set back in gardens with gravelled paths, and the Moorish bulk of Masonic Hall

half hid by stores Beyond the Circus they proceeded on foot to a four square brick dwelling with weeping willows and an arched wood sign above the entrance painted with the designation Miss Brundon s Select Academy

Jasper Penny found Miss Brundon in a small bare immaculate office She was sitting at a table and as he entered with Eunice dragging desperately at his hand she half rose with a quick faint blush

Mr Penny she exclaimed in a low charming surprise I didn t expect so soon to have the pleasure here at my school' He firmly moved Eunice from her position at his back An unexpected pleasure for me he replied I came to consult with you about this little girl — the daughter of a friend of mine A friend I may add in difficult circumstances and for whom I am prepared to do a great deal I had hoped — Stephen Jannan told me about your exceptional establishment — that you could take her She needs just the supervision that I am certain you offer

Of course she replied immediately I d be glad to have any one recommended by you I do think my school is unusual You see there is almost no provision for the supervision of such young ladies And I have been very fortunate in my girls I try not to be snobbish Mr Penny but indeed if a place like this is to be useful some care is required Probably you would like an assurance of their studies and deportment'

the high sombre shelves of a calf bound law library a ponderous cabriolet table sturdy, rush seated Dutch chairs and a Franklin stove with slender brass capitols and shining hod

A chair Jasper Stephen Jannan directed You ought to know them they came out of Myrtle Forge — some of old Gilbert s Your mother gave them to me when she did over the house in this new French fancy Jasper Penny was momentarily at a loss for an adequate opening of the subject that had brought him there Finally he plunged directly into his purpose You must know Stephen' he said that I am decidedly obligated to a Mrs Scofield Jannan nodded shortly The thing dragged on for a number of years but is quite dead now in fact it has been for a considerable number of months That in itself doesn t bother me it is comparatively simple but there is a child a girl Stephen

I didn t know that the other acknowledged It is an ugly difficulty Do you wish to legitimatize your — the child? There is marriage of course

I have no intention of marrying Essie Scofield" Jasper Penny said coldly And I am almost certain she wouldn t consent if I had I am quite willing to assume a proper responsibility but there is a limit to my conception of that There was never any serious question of marriage there is none now

I simply wish to get complete control of Eunice by adoption perhaps she is seven years old

There are no laws of adoption as such in Pennsylvania Jannan told him The only State with that provision is Louisiana there by an act of Legislature the thing can be legalized I could arrange it through correspondence a certain residence within the State It would be cumbersome and expensive but possible He paused frowning Devilish awkward he muttered make a stench in a family such as ours However he added a contract practically to the same effect can be drawn This with her consent would be entirely binding on Mrs Scofield If the child can write it would be well to have her signature on the deed Bring them here she should have counsel

After that I suppose the name could be arranged

Exactly The child of course would have no legal status as your heir Anything she got would have to be willed direct The other nodded It was all far more simple than he had hoped He almost saw a definite lightening of the future Is the girl with her mother now? Jannan queried

I took her away yesterday Jasper Penny replied negligently We went to the Circus and at present she is at Miss Brundon s Academy He was surprised by the sudden concern on his cousin s handsome florid countenance By heaven Jas

while Eunice was being fetched "Her things have already come from the hotel Miss Brundon proceeded Where shall I send them?" Eunice broke in with a shrill protest. Do I have to go? I don t want to Her face was scarlet with revolt. I can walk up and down the room with a book on my head while another little girl had to be all done with a board to her back

Jasper Penny wondered if he would see Miss Brundon again soon The last was an afterthought bred by the realization that he could not permit her to depart absolutely from his life There was a great deal that he a rich and influential man of practical affairs might do for her He was certain that Susan Brundon needed exactly the assistance he could give probably people robbed her traded callously on her unsuspicious nature Yet when the moment came to leave he could think of nothing to say beyond the banality of looking for her at the Jannans

I go out very little she told him "the work here absorbs me and unfortunately my eyes are not strong They require constant rest He expressed regret once more for any disturbance he might have caused and after hesitating awkwardly left with Eunice hanging fretfully at his hand What in God s name was he to do with the child? He walked slowly his face half lost in the fur of his overcoat oblivious in his concentration on the difficulties of her situation of Eunice progressing dis

contentedly at his side A petulant complaint rose at intervals to an audible sob Looking down as the sobs threatened to become a continuous crying he saw the top of the velvet bonnet and her diminutive hands in scarlet knitted mitts He would have to stop dragging her from place to place a suitable position for the present was all he hoped for now There must be other institutions larger and farther away to which Eunice could be sent He had a vague memory of such a place somewhere on the Delaware was it at Burlington?

But he could not continue living with his daughter at Sanderson s Hotel Jasper Penny decided that he would take her that afternoon to the house of the head machinist of his nail works at Jaffa the town that its beginning growing largely out of the Penny industries lay a scant mile from Myrtle Forge Speever was a superior man his wife a robust Cornish woman in a crisp apron would give Eunice an energetic and proper care

A thin flexible mantle of snow lay over the drab earth sweeping up to a Grecian marble edifice making more dreary the bulk of the Eastern Penitentiary and foundation of Girard College and emphasizing the winter desertion of the reaches of the Fairmount Water Works She soon grew absorbed in the various aspects of their transportation — the echo of the whip cracking over the mules that drew the coaches across the covered viaduct the labouring stationary engine and their slow ascent

beyond They saw lining the river, a cemetery elevated starkly against the sky and followed a canal by a broken black flood between snowy banks

Past a town with impressive residences and manufactories with low spreading veils of smoke they came on a confusion of canals and canal boats lock dams and bridges mules and raffish crews with tanned faces and brightly coloured jackets and boots Again crossing the river and a shallow tranquil valley the train brigade rolled into the main street of Jaffa It was a town of small brick dwellings spaced in orderly yards echoing to the diminished clamour of the Penny Rolling Mills on the outskirts Beyond the walls starkly red against the snow the blackened main street the river was spotted with ice

Edgar Speever s wife accepted Eunice with an immediate and unquestioning capability and Jasper Penny turned away with a momentary but immense relief In a few days after the deed for the possession of the child had been executed he could place her more permanently He walked out to the miscellaneous group of buildings and cluttered yards that held his inherited activity and in the small single roomed building of the main office discussed with his superintendent the changes improvements of process then under way The old nail machines propelled by the feet and hands of an operator and producing but one nail at a time had been replaced by a high power engine self heading machinery

The superintendent complained of the pig from the new hot blast furnaces Impure he declared And this new stone coal firing too makes but poor stuff It ll never touch the old charcoal forging Hammered bar s at ninety and I m glad to get it then The puddling furnaces will do something with the grey pig we have eight in blast now turn ing out the railroad and heavier bars This year will see forty five hundred tons of iron worked and close to four thousand kegs of nails

Jasper Penny listened attentively it was his in tention soon to dispense entirely with all the time honoured methods of iron manufacture Water power with its unequal flow any large employment of charcoal growing increasingly expensive with the rapid diminishment of the forests must give place to the steam blast machine and anthracite If his manager was unable to change develop with the changing times he would find another more scientific

Outside the early twilight made more grey the dingy sheds and buildings the heaped slag the long brick rectangle of the rolling mill with its triple imposed ventilated roof and the high smoking stacks of the puddling furnaces rising four from either length gave out an undiminished deafening uproar the clamour of the bars falling out from the rollers the spatter of hammers and dull dragging of heavy weights The engine of the nail works rent all other sound with an unaccustomed harsh blast

Jasper Penny was conscious of a deep invol

untary relief when he reached the comparative tran quillity the secession of vexatious problems accom plished by Myrtle Forge

XIV

THERE was as always an elaborate steaming supper with his mother in a pelisse of black silk ruching and Amity Merken at their places He noted that an empty chair had been put as customary at the opposite end of the table and with a trace of impatience ordered its removal He wondered momentarily at his petty act and then his thoughts returned to Susan Brundon Jasper Penny saw her blue gaze lifted to his face the hesitating smile he felt again the pervading influence of her delicate yet essentially unshrinking spirit She would possess an enormous steadfastness of purpose he decided a potentiality of immovable self sacrifice Yet she was the gentlest person alive An unusual and resplendent combination of traits rare possibilities

She had told him that she seldom went about — her school absorbed her and her eyes needed care rest He must ask Stephen Jannan further about her They were sitting Jasper Penny his mother and her sister in the parlour a large square chamber hung with dark maroon paper and long many tasselled and corniced window curtains in sombre green plush A white wedgewood mantel with orna

ments in olive and blue, above a brass fretted closed stove, supported a high mirror, against which were ranged a pair of tall astral lamps shining in green and red spars of light through their pendants, a French clock — a crystal ball in a miniature Ionic pavilion of gilt — and artificial bouquets of coloured wax under glass domes A thick carpet of purplish black velvet pile covered the floor from wall to wall stiff Adam chairs and settee with wheelbacks of black and gold were upholstered in dusky ruby and indigo Ebony tables of framed inlaid onyx held tortoise shell and lacquer ornaments an inlaid tulip wood music box volumes in elaborately tooled mo rocco and a globe where apparently metallic fish were suspended in a translucent green gloom

The light from the multiple candelabras of ormolu and cut lustres streamed from the walls over Jasper Penny sunk forward in profound absorption and his mother s busy fat hands working with gay worsteds At her side a low stand of rubbed Chinese vermilion held her spilling yarns Her face was placid dryly pinkish and full An irreproachable domestic female Herself the daughter of a success ful Pennsylvania German Ironmaster her wealth had doubled the Penny successes There had been other children Jasper could only faintly remember two mostly in the *form of infantile whimpering*

The inevitable termination of the evening was reached by the appearance of a pitcher of steaming spiced mulled wine A cupful was formally pre-

sented to Amity Merken Gilda Penny sipped hers with an audible satisfaction and Jasper Penny absently drank the fragrant compound of cinnamon bark and lemon cloves sugar and claret A measure of that before retiring could not but be beneficial to Susan Brundon fatigued by the duties of her Academy He thought of the sharper breath of the brandy and oranges compounded by Essie Scofield A thin odour of foxglove clung to the memory of his wife

XV

JASPER PENNY supplemented Jannan s letter to Essie Scofield asking for an appointment with his client at the law office with a short communication laying before her the condition in which he had found Eunice his knowledge of her neglect to provide their daughter with the funds he had sent *for* that purpose and definite plans for his complete control of the child At the despatch of this he felt that his duty where Essie as a formal parent resided was ended It was now only a question of an agreement on terms He got no reply, other than a notification from Stephen Jannan that a meeting had been arranged for the following week And at eleven o clo k on a clear thin blue winter morning he mounted with Eunice to the entrance of Jannan s offices on Fourth Street

Essie *Scofield* in widespread mulberry silk with tight sleeves and broad steel buttons a close brimmed blue bonnet filled with hlacs and tied with an old rose ribbon was more compelling than Jasper Penny had remembered her for actually years A coffee-coloured India shawl with a deep fringe and trace of a lining checkered in cherry and black slip-

ping from her shoulders toned her appearance to a potential dignity

' Eunice she exclaimed as the child entered 'do come here at my side' A small cold mouth was silently raised for a straining embrace Stephen Jannan proceeded at once addressing Essie Scofield Mr Penny informs me that he has written you explaining our purpose I have already instructed you of the law in such a connexion and there remains only your signatures to these papers I begged you if you will remember to come with counsel but since you have not done that it will be best for you to read this deed which is quite clear in its intent

Essie gazed dramatically at the paper the lawyer tended her It means she said that I am to lose Eunice and because I cannot offer her any *advantages beyond those of a slim purse* I am a most unfortunate creature Jasper Penny scraped his chair back impatiently but Stephen enforced his silence with a gesture While my client understands that no monetary consideration can compensate for the breaking of ties of affection Stephen Jannan went on smoothly and while he offers none in payment to that end still we feel that some material recognition should be due you Have you anything to say suggest at this point?

Essie Scofield s arm was about Eunice s waist I am to be parted from my little daughter he exclaimed and my tears are to be stopped with

gold — an affectionate breast, a heart wrung appeal stilled by a bribe That is the price paid by a trusting an unsuspicious female Long ago when a mere girl dazzled by —

We won t go into that, Jannan interrupted but confine ourselves to the immediate development By signing the paper in question and accepting a sum of money you surrender all claim to this child known as Eunice Scofield

How will that affect my — my position in other ways? she demanded in a suddenly shrewd suspicious tone Not at all the lawyer assured her She sobbed once emotionally and Eunice regarded her with a wide unsparing curiosity 'A stranger to me she gasped with a paper white face and fluttering eyelids Jasper Penny ejaculated sharply How much Essie?' In a moment he judged familiar with a potential hysteria she might faint scream there were clerks people in the next rooms On the brink of collapse she hesitated twisting her purple kid gloves

Ten thousand dollars she said

Stephen Jannan glanced swiftly at his cousin and the latter nodded "That is satisfactory Jannan announced 'A mere formality — witnesses' Essie Scofield traced her signature in round unformed characters Jasper Penny followed with a hasty small script and Eunice seated at the impressive table printed her name slowly blotting it

with a trailing sleeve The lawyer swung back the door of a heavy safe and took out a package o white bills of exchange on the Bank of Pennsylvania Essie counted the notes independently thrust the money into a steel beaded reticule with silk cords and rose gathering together her cashmere shawl She ignored Eunice totally in the veiled gaze she directed at Jasper Penny It is better she told him 'if you write first when you expect to visit me Really the last time with some friends there you were impossible He bowed stiffly Don t let a sense of duty bring you she concluded boldly I get on surprisingly well as it is as it is she reiterated and he thought her voice bore almost a threat

When she had gone the two men sat gazing in a common perplexity at the child Stephen Jannan s *lips were compressed Jasper Penny s face was* slightly drawn as if by pain Eunice was investigating a thick stick of vermilion sealing wax and a steel die Well? Jannan queried nodding toward the table I thought something of Burlington' Penny replied but decided to place her in New York Want to give her all the chance possible I intend at what seems the proper time to ecure her my own name He stopped the objection crouding his cousin s countenance We won t argue that please Now about the will the provision must be explicit and generous There at

least I am able to meet a just requirement' Jasper Penny s will was produced a codicil projected appended and witnesses recalled

I wanted to inquire about Miss Brundon Jasper said finally the business despatched "She seems to me very fragile for the conducting of an Academy Is there no family men to support her? And her institution — does it continue to progress well?

Very Jannan replied to the last question first Her children come from the best families in the city and under my advice her charges are high She has a brother I believe a cotton merchant of New Orleans and quite prosperous But he has a large family and Susan will not permit him to deprive it of a dollar for her benefit As you say, she is not strong but in spite of that she needs no man s patronage The finest qualities Jasper the most elevated spirit A little too conscientious perhaps and although she is thirty nine curiously ignorant of the world but rare rare It almost seems as if there were a conspiracy to keep ugly truths away from her

Truths Jasper Penny thought bitterly such as had just been revealed in Stephen s office There was it seemed nothing he could do for Susan Brundon He envied the lawyer his position of familiar adviser the ease with which the other spoke her name Susan He rose fumbling with a jade seal 'Come Eunice he said the lines deepening about

his mouth and eyes Stephen Jannan assisted him into the heavy furred coat 'Well Jasper he remarked sympathetically if we could but look ahead if we were older in our youth yes and younger in our increasing age the world would be a different place He held out to Eunice a newly minted Brazilian goldpiece 'Good bye he addressed her command me if I can be of any use She clutched the gold tightly and Jasper Penny led her out into the winter street We must have dinner he said gravely With some yellow rock candy she added and syllabubs

XVI

HE returned to Myrtle Forge from New York with a mingled sense of pleasure and the feeling that his place was unsupportably empty The loneliness of which he had been increasingly conscious seemed to have its focus in his house The following morning he walked restlessly down the short steep descent to the Forge, lying on its swift water diverted from Canary Creek Unlike a great many iron families of increasing prosperity, the Pennys had not erected the unsightly buildings of their manufacturing about the scene of their initial activity and mansion Jasper's father, Daniel Barnes Penny under whose hand their success had largely multiplied had grouped their first rolling mill and small nail works by the canal at Jaffa preserving the pastoral aspect of Myrtle Forge with its farmland and small, ancient, stone buildings

Jasper had only made some unimportant changes at the Forge itself — the pigs were subjected to the working of two hearths now the chafery where the greater part of the sulphur was burned out, and the finery The old system of bellows had been replaced by a wood cylinder compressing air by piston into a chamber from which the blast was regulated A

blacksmith s shed had been added in the course of time and a brick coke oven He stopped at the Forge shed filled with ruddy light and shadow the ringing of hammers and silently watched the malleable metal on the anvil Flakes of glowing iron fell changing from ruby to blue and black

The Penny iron! The Forge had been operated continuously since seventeen twenty seven hammer ing out the foundation of his Jasper s position He had taken a not inconsiderable place in the suc cession of the men of his family in him the Pennys had reached their greatest importance wealth But after him what? He was now the last Penny man The foothold Gilbert had cut out of the wild which Howat and Casimir — an outlandish name obviously traceable to his mother the foreign widow — had in turn increased for Daniel and Jas per would be dissipated His great great aunt Caroline marrying a solid Quaker had contributed too to the family stamina while her granddaugh ter wedding a Jannan had increased the social pres tige and connections of the family The Jannans bankers and lawyers had already converted the greater part of their iron inheritance into more speculative finance and the burden of the industry rested on Jasper Penny s shoulders

At his death the name the long and faithful labour the tangible monument of their endurance and rectitude except for the tenuous momentary fact of Eunice would be overthrown forgot He

was conscious of a strong inner protest against such oblivion He had of course often before lamented the fact that he had no son but suddenly his loss became a hundred times more poignant, regrettable Jasper Penny caught again the remembered oppressive odour of foxglove, the aromatic reek of brandy and oranges one in its implications as sterile as the other He was possessed by an overwhelming sense of essential failure, a recurrence of the dark mood that had enveloped him in leaving the Jannans' ball

Yet he thought again he was still in the midstride of his life his powers His health was unimpaired his presence bore none of the slackening aspect of increasing years These feelings occupied him, speeding in a single cutter sleigh over the crisp snow of the road leading from his home to Shadrach Furnace where Graham Jannan and his young wife had been newly installed in the foremens dwelling There was a slight uneasiness about Graham s lungs in consequence of which he had been taken out of the banking house of an uncle Jannan and Provost, and set at the more robust task of picking up the management of an iron furnace

It was early afternoon the sky was as dryly powdered with unbroken blue as was the earth with white The silver bells and scarlet pompons of the harness crackled in the still intense cold and a blanched vapour hung about the horse s head Jasper Penny

enveloped in voluminous buffalo robes and fur gazed with an increased interest at the familiar flowing scene nearby the forest had been cut and suave rolling fields stretched to a far mauve haze of trees the ultramarine smoke of farmhouse chimneys every where climbed into the pale wash of sunlight orderly fence succeeded fence. How rapidly and prosper ous the country was growing! Even he could remember wide reaches of wild that were now culti vated The game quail and wild turkey and deer was fast disappearing The country was growing amazingly too extending through the Louisiana Purchase State by State to Mexico and the Texan border The era of the greatness of the United States had hardly begun while it was more than probable that the greatness the power of the Penny family faced an imminent destruction His revolt at this joining the more personal sense of the empti ness of his existence filled him with a bitter energy a determination to conquer somehow the obdurate facts hemming him in

The sleigh dropped over a rise into a shallow fold of hills with a collection of structures on a slope, and a number of solid small grey stone dwellings He glanced subconsciously at the stack of Shadrach Furnace and saw that it was in blast — a colourless lively flame with a thin white smoke like crumpled muslin playing about its base The metallic ring of a smithy rose at a crossing of roads and from the

east house drifted the refrain of a German song He turned in by the comparatively long low façad of the house where the Jannans were living

A negro led the horse and sleigh back to a stable and, briskly sounding the polished iron doorknocker, he let himself into the dining room a chamber with a wide, pot hung fireplace and plain mahogany consul tables with wood chairs brightly painted with archaic flowers and scrolls in gold Standing at the far side of the room delicately outlined against a low deeply embrasured window was Susan Brundon

A slow tide of colour rose to her ordinarily pale cheeks corresponding with a formless gladness permeating his own being She wore ruffled lavender with a clear lace pelerine caught at her breast by a knot of straw coloured ribbon and sprig of rose geranium Mr Penny she said with a little gasp of surprise but her gaze was unwavering candid

Why not? he replied lightly I have a small interest in Shadrach You are surprising — so far from that absorbing Academy

It s my eyes again she explained I am obliged to rest There is a very good assistant at the school and Mary sweetly thought the country would do me good

It is really miraculous Mary Jannan stated entering from the kitchen she ll almost never Weren t we lucky? She was a small woman with smooth brown hair and an air of quiet capability

' And it s splendid to see you she continued to

Jasper Penny Don t for a minute think you ll get off before to morrow, perhaps not then Graham is out chop chopping wood Actually — the suave Graham She indicated a high row of pegs for Jasper Penny s furs Everything is ter ribly primitive Most of the furniture was so sound that we couldn t bring ourselves to discard it all however old fashioned Little by little Graham Jannan entered a tall thin young man with crisp pale yellow hair and a clean shaven sanguine coun tenance with challenging light blue eyes He greeted the older man with a firm cold hand clasp I sup pose you ve come out to discover what I have learn d about iron Well I know now that a sow is not nec essarily a lady and that some blooms have no bou quet Good rum has though after sleighing

Upon alternately burning his fingers and throat with a steaming glass of St Croix Jasper Penny and Graham Jannan proceeded to the Furnace where in the cast house they watched the preparation for a flow of metal The head founder McQuatty bearded to the eyes and swathed in a hide apron stood at the Ironmaster s side The charcoal you d get s not worth a bawbee he complained soft stuff would hardly run lead And where they d cut six thou sand cords of wood will no longer show more than four Shadrach ought to put out twenty-eight tons of pig in a week and you see the statements

Stone coal' Jasper Penny replied ' and a hot blast' He turned to describe the latter to Jannan.

'It'll come' the founder agreed "and the quality will go' He went forward to tap the clay sealed hearth The liquid iron poured into the channels of its sand bed sputtering and slowly fading to dingy grey 'I d like you to take hold of this' Jasper Penny told the younger man 'great changes im provements are just over the hill I ll miss them—a link between the old and the new But you would see it all The railroad will bring about an iron age and then perhaps steel I look for trouble too—this damned States Rights The South has been un easy since the Carolina Nullification Act It will be a time for action He gazed keenly at Graham Jan nan A promising young man he thought with a considerable asset in his wife A woman the right woman could make a tremendous difference in a man s capabilities

He elaborated this thought fantastically at dinner, sitting opposite Susan Brundon Mary Jannan wore orange crepe with black loops of ball fringe and purple silk dahlias and beside her Miss Brun don s dress was noticeably simple She volunteered little but when directly addressed answered in a gentle hesitating voice that veiled the directness the conviction of her replies The right woman Jasper Penny repeated silently Ten fifteen years ago when he had been free he would have acted immedi ately on the feeling that Susan Brundon was exactly the wife he wanted But no such person had ap peared at that momentous period in his life

However then he had been a totally different being perhaps the appreciation of Miss Brundon her actual reality lay for him entirely in his own perceptions But if she would not have been the woman for him then by heaven she was now! He expressed this unaware of its wide implications unconscious of the effect it would instantly have The thing silently uttered bred an enormously increased need the absolute determination that she was necessary to his most perfunctory being The thought of her alone he discovered had been sufficient to give him a new energy a sense of rare satisfaction

Shortly expressed he wanted to marry her he had not he told himself oddly ever been married The word had a significance which heretofore he had completely missed A strange emotion stirred into being a longing thrown out from his new desire the late born feeling of dissatisfaction it was a wish for something in Susan Brundon which he experienced but could not name Roughly stated it was a hunger to surround her with security comfort to fortify the at best doubtful position of life in death for her Yet he acknowledged to himself that this regard for her safety was mostly the result of his own inner blind striving Her happiness had magically become his Beyond that he was unable to penetrate

After supper they gathered in the chamber beyond the dining room Here Jasper Penny found an incongruous mingling of old and new furniture There

was a high waxed walnut desk and cabinet, severely simple and before it a chair with a back of elaborately carved and gilded tulips tufted in plum coloured velvet The thick carpet was a deep rose and the drapery of the mantel and windows garnet A painted hood of brilliant Chinese colours had been fastened before what was evidently an open hearth for which a coal stove was substituted On the middle of the floor was an oriental hassock in silver brocade while a corner held a spinet piano decorated in roseate cupids flower sprays and gold leaf Again an old clock in Spanish mahogany with a rudely painted glass door had been left on the wall

Mary Jannan at the piano wove a delicate succession of arpeggios She sang in a small and graceful voice a cavatina *Tanti Palpiti* Then Ah que les amours de beaux heurs Jasper Penny listened with an unconscious approving pretence of understanding But when in the course of her repertoire she reached *Sweet Sister Fay* and *The Horn of My Loved One I Hear* his pleasure became active Susan Brundon on the hassock, lifted her sensitive face to the mild candle light and its still pallor gave him a shock of delight Her hands were folded in the voluminous sweep of her crinoline the ribbons at her breast rose and fell softly

Jasper Penny and Graham were smoking long fragrant cigars that the former had produced from a lacquered case and Jannan had the ingredients of

the hot punch at his elbow It amused the young man to persuade Susan Brundon to take a sip from his glass and they all laughed at her subsequent gasping Jasper Penny was astoundingly happy his being radiated a warmth and contentment more potent than that of the St Croix rum It was accompanied by an extraordinary lightness of spirit a feeling of the desirability of life The memory of his greying hair had left him not it was true to be replaced by the surging emotions of youth but by a deep satisfaction

Susan Brundon Susan the right woman He marvelled again at the brightness of spirit that shone in her — like a flame through a fine paper lantern Susan at Myrtle Forge His thought became concrete he knew now definitely that he had determined to marry her His peace of mind increased There was no need for hurry the mere idea was irradiating yet there must be no unnecessary delay Incontrovertibly he had passed forty The best period in a man s life They would go to the West Indies he decided A ring with a square emerald and roses of pearls It was almost immediately time to retire His room narrow with a sloping wall had a small window giving on a flawless rectangle of snow like the purity of Susan Brundon

As he lay in bed staring wakefully against the dark another memory crept into his thoughts — the echo of a small querulous voice ' yellow rock candy

and syllabubs Eunice! A sudden consternation seized him as he realized the necessity of telling Susan fully about his daughter No escape, evasion, was possible If she discovered the existence, the history, of the child afterward — he lingered over the happiness that term implied — it would destroy her This, he told himself was not merely melodrama he was thinking of her delicate spirituality, so completely shielded from the bald fatality of facts An increasing dread seized him at the thought of the hurt his revelation would inflict on her The interweaving of life in life consequence on consequence, the unbroken intricacy of the whole fabric of existence realized anew filled him with bitter rebellion The blind commitment of a vanished youth, potent after years still hung in a dark cloud over Susan Brundon He was conscious of the past like an insuperable lead weight dragging at his attempted progress The secret errors of all the pasts that had made him rose in a haggard shadowy troop about his bed perpetuated multiplied against his aspirations of tranquil release

Yet he told himself dressing in the bright flood of morning if nothing perished but the mere, shredding flesh one quality persisted equally with the other — the symbol of Essie Scofield was no more actual than Susan He had breakfast early with Graham Jannan and in a reviving optimism arranged for the Jannans to bring Miss Brundon to Myrtle Forge for a night before her departure He

whirled away in a sparkling veil of flung snow crys tals before the women appeared

Susan Brundon would naturally, shrink from what he must tell her but he was suddenly confident of his ability to convince her of the superior importance of the actuality of what they together might make of the future He was accustomed to the bending of *circumstance to his will* in the end he would prove stronger than any hesitancy she might perhaps re veal His desire to have her had grown to such proportions that he could not for an instant think of existence without her as an intimate part He even mentally determined when he should go to the city the jeweller s for the square emerald and flowered pearls He would do over the rooms where he had lived in the thin formality of his marriage with Phœbe settle an amount on Essie shred ding flesh It would do the living woman no more injury than the dead Oranges and brandy satin and gold and ease

He wrote through Stephen Jannan to Essie Sco field that afternoon stating the generous terms of his final arrangement with her making it plain that all personal contact between them had reached an *end Hereafter she mu t exclusively address any* unavoidable communications to Mr Jannan She disregarded this in a direct inevitably complaining laborious scrawl However he could read through it her obvious relief at complete independence She would she thought stay where she was for a little

a period of perfunctory sentimentality followed He destroyed the letter turning with deep pleasure to the message from Graham Jannan that he would bring Susan Brundon and Mary to Myrtle Forge the following day

His mother, with Amity Merken like a timid and reduced replica at her back greeted the Jannans and Miss Brundon at the door Jasper Penny came forward from the smoking room to the right of the main entrance where the men retired for an appetizer of gin and bitters The older man was garbed with exact care His whiskers were closely trimmed on either side of his severe mouth and shapely dominant chin and his sombre eyes under their brows drawn up toward the temples held an unusual raillery Amity Merken he learned had desired to stay away from the supper table but to her distress he forced her into a chair set by himself Susan sat at the other end of the table in the place that had been Phebe s He gazed at her with a satisfaction without surprise for it seemed to him that the woman beyond him had always occupied the fore of his existence She wore pale grey the opening at her neck filled with soft lace and pinned with a garnet brooch and a deep fringed white silk shawl The conversation was ambling but to Jasper Penny pitched in a key of utter delight He said little through supper and at its end with Graham Jannan immediately followed the others into the parlour

There Mary Jannan repeated her songs French English and Italian and Jasper Penny listened with a poignant emotional response Graham and his wife had arranged to sleigh back to Shadrach Furnace that evening but Susan Brundon was to stay at Myrtle Forge and take the train from Jaffa to morrow The Jannans finally departed and Jasper Penny showing Susan through the chambers of the lower floor succeeded in delaying her seated in the smoking room

XVII

NOW that the moment which he had so carefully planned had arrived he was curiously reluctant to precipitate Susan and himself into the future The lamps on a mantel, hooded in alabaster cast a diffused radiance over Susan s silvery dress on her countenance faintly flushed above the white folds of the shawl What is that sound? ' she suddenly queried 'I heard it all through supper and before It seems to live in the walls the very air here

The trip hammer of Myrtle Forge he replied gravely 'I suppose it might fancifully be called the beating of the Penny heart it does pound through every associated stone and I have a notion that when it stops we shall stop too The Penny men have all been faithful to it and it has been faithful to us given us a hold in a new country a hold of wrought iron'

How beautiful she murmured 'how strong and safe'

It pleases me that you feel that' he plunged directly into his purpose for I intend to offer you all the strength and safety it contains Her hands fluttered to her cheeks a sudden fear touched

her yet her eyes found his unwaveringly ' If that were all he continued standing above her if I had only to tell you of the iron if the metal were flawless I d be overwhelmed with gladness But almost no iron is perfect the longest refining leaves bubbles faults Men are like that too Susan She grew troubled sensitively following his mood her hands were now pressed to her breast her lips parted She was so bewilderingly pure in her dim lit pearly haze of silk that he paused with an involuntary con traction of pain at what must follow

The child Eunice he struggled on I couldn t leave her at the Academy because it might injure you I had brought her in a most blind egotism and so I took her away She is my daughter

He saw that at first she totally missed the implica tion of his words But she stammered I was told you had no how would that —? Then she stopped as sharply as if a hand had compres ed her throat A vivid mantle of colour rose in her face she made a motion of rising of flight but sank back weakly It is criminally indelicate to sp ak to you of this he said but it was absolutely neces sary I want to marry you in that circumstance a lie would be fatal later or sooner

She attempted to speak her lips quivered but only a low gasp was audible It was worse even than he had feared Now however that he had told her he felt happier more confident Surely after a little she would forgive forget I want

to marry you he repeated torn with pity at her fragility her visible suffering ' All that might hurt you has been put out of my life, out of our future The way is open before us the refining I would do anything to spare you believe that but the truth now, best

' Always,' she said in a faint voice "I am trying to — to realize Oh! I suppose such things do occur but the child herself you — don t see how that so near — she broke off, gazing wide eyed out of her misery He was conscious of the dull regular beat of the Forge hammer God how the imperfections persisted! But he told himself savagely, in the end the metal was steadfast He would certainly overcome her natural revulsion from what she had just heard The colour had left her cheeks, violet shadows gathered about her eyes she seemed more unsubstantial than ever He would repay again and again the suffering he had brought her Having declared himself he was almost tranquil there was a total absence of the impetuous emotionalism of youth the blind tyranny of desire His feeling was deeper and accompanied by a far more involved philosophy of self recognition At the same time while acutely conscious of his absolute need of Susan Brundon he was at a loss to discover its essence shape Before he had known her he had been obsessed by a distaste for his existence he had desperately wanted something without definition And Susan was that desire delicate clear-eyed

Susan Yet still the heart of her escaped him

Jasper Penny had told himself that his new dissatisfaction was merely the result of his accumulating years but beyond the fact that such an increase might have brought him different and keener perceptions that explanation was entirely inadequate He wanted a quality beyond his experience beyond he realized any material condition — Susan Brundon yes but it was no comparatively simple urge of sex the natural selection of the general animal creation There was no question of passionate importunities those here would be worse than futile all that he desired was beyond words moving in obedience to a principle of which he had not caught the slightest glimpse Yet confident of his ultimate victory he maintained the dominating presence of a black Penny

Susan Brundon had sunk back into the depths of her capacious chair she seemed utterly exhausted as if she had been subjected to a prolonged brutal strain But still her eyes sought him steady in their hurt regard There is so much that I can give you he blundered immediately conscious of the sterility of his phrase I mean better things — peace and attention and — and understanding I won t attempt any of the terms usual commonplace at such moments you must take them where they are worthy for granted I only tell you a lamentable fact and ask you to marry me promise you the *tenderest care* —

'I know that' she replied, with obvious difficulty, hesitation 'I'll not thank you It is terribly difficult for me I'd like to answer you as you wish I mean reply to — to your request But the other the child, dragged about there was such a distrust a wariness in her face"

There is no good in thinking of that alone' he stated with a return of his customary decision No one can walk backwards into the future Try to consider only the immediate question what I have asked you — will you marry me?'

Is that all you have to explain?' she asked 'Is there now no one else that counts?" The edge of a cold dread entered his hopes If you refer to the child's mother he said stiffly, "she is amply well taken care of, you need waste no sentimental thoughts on her

Ah!' Susan exclaimed shrinking Her hands closed tightly on the wide silk of her skirt The fear deepened within him it would be impossible to explain Essie to the woman before him Essie, falsely draped in conventional attributes, defied him to utter the simple truth He raged silently at his impotence the inhibition that prevented the expression of what might be said for himself Essie Scofield had like every one else lived in the terms of her being attracting to herself what essentially she was it was neither bad nor good but inevitable His contact with her had been the result of mutual qualities qualities that were no longer valid Yet to say that

would place him in a damnable light give him the aspect of the meanest opportunist Susan breathed

That poor woman It was precisely what he had expected feared — the adventitious illusion' He had an impulse to describe to her even at the price of his own condemnation the condition in which he had found Eunice but that too perished *silently* Jasper Penny grew restive under the unusual restraint of his position

' Do you mind — no more at present Susan Brundon said I am upset please another time if it is necessary I feel that I couldn t answer any thing now I must go up no your mother will show me She rose and he realized that she would listen no further There was an astonishing strength of purpose behind her deprecating presence She was more determined than himself He watched her walk evenly from the room heard the low stir of voices be yond with a feeling that he had been perhaps fatally clumsy All that he had said had been wrong brutally selfish He had deliberately invited failure he should have been patient waited given her a chance to know and if possible value him come to depend on him on his judgment his ability in her welfare But in place of making himself a neces sity he had launched at once into facts which she must find hideous She had said another time if necessary His mouth drew into a set line — there would be another and another until he had per suaded gained her

He lit a cigar, and walked discontentedly up and across the room The sound of the Forge hammer again crept into his consciousness the Penny iron — the fibre the actuality of the Penny men! He repeated this arrogantly but the declaration no longer brought reassurance the certainty even of the iron faded from him he had failed there too digging a pit of oblivion for all that their generations of toil had accomplished The past inexorably woven into the pattern of the future! Eunice so soon wary distrustful Susan had seen that immediately would perpetuate all that he wished dead — Essie and himself bound together projected in an undesirable immortality through endless lives striving like himself to escape from old chains

If he failed with Susan his existence would have been an unmitigated evil the iron his petty material triumphs would rust but the other go on and on His thoughts became a maze of pity for Eunice infinite regret of the past a bitter energy of hope for what might follow

He turned with pride to his forging — long wrought charcoal iron the world would know no better Still with his penetration of the future he realized that the old careful processes were doomed He had difficulty in assembling enough adequate workmen to fill the increasing contracts for bar iron and rails now and the demand with the extension of steam railways would grow resistlessly More wholesale methods of production were being utilized

daily he was one of the foremost adherents of improvement but suddenly he felt a poignant regret at the inevitable passing of the old order of great Ironmasters th principalities of furnaces and forges He was still he felt such a master of his men and miles of forests and clearings lime pits and ore banks coal holes mills coke ovens hearths and manufactories He might still drive to Virginia through a continuous line of his interests his domination over his labourers in all their personal and industrial implications was patriarchal he commanded through their allegiance and his entire grasp on every iota of their living their day s journey but he told himself he was practically the last of his kind

New and different industrial combinations were locking together in great agglomerations of widely separated activities the human was superseded by the industrial machine where men were efficient subservient cogs in a cold and successful automaton of business A system of general credit was springing up the old old payments in kind in iron or even meal and apparel or gold had given place to reciprocal understandings of deferred indebtedness The actual thousands of earlier commerce were replaced by theoretical millions His own realty his personal property because of such understandings were outside computation They were he knew reckoned in surprising figures but in a wide spread panic forced liquidation the greater part of his

wealth would break like straw It was the same with the entire country

His thoughts returned to Susan to the longing for the peace the inviolable security, she would bring to the centre the heart, of his life No material catastrophe could shape deplete, her richness of spirit Fragile as she was, with her need of rest her diffidence and pallor she yet seemed to Jasper Penny the most — the only — secure thing in the world She defied he murmured death itself Wonderful

He moved slowly to his sombre bed room with its dark velour hangings and ponderous black walnut furniture precisely scrolled with gilt The interior absorbed the light of a single lamp robbing it of radiance A clock deliberately struck the hour with an audible whirring of the spring Jasper Penny took out from a drawer a tall narrow ledger its calf binding powdering in a yellow dust with a blur ring label Forgebook Myrtle Forge 1750 He sat opening it on the arm of an old Windsor reading chair he had insisted on retaining among the recent upholstery and studied the entries some written in a small script with ornamental capitals and red lined day headings others in an abrupt man ner with heavy down strokes The latter he knew, had been made by his great grandfather Howat

"Jonas Rupp charged with three pair of woollen stockings shoes for Minnie' Howat had been young when Minnie s shoes were new twenty some-

thing — five or six He must have married not long after Howat — like himself — a black Penny The special interest Jasper Penny felt for this particular ancestor grew so vivid that he almost felt the other s presence in the room at his shoulder He consciously repressed the desire to turn suddenly and surprise the shadowy and yet clear figure in the gloom The features of the youth so long gone and yet too he felt the replica of his own young years were plain the dark eyes slanted brows the impatient mouth

His community of sympathy with the other who was still in a measure himself was inexplicable for obviously Howat had escaped Jasper s blundering — an early marriag a son the son whose name like hi mother s made such an exotic note in a long sound succession of Isabels and Carolines and Gilberts was a far different tale from his own Yet it persisted It seemed to him that the silence of the room grew strained there was the peculiar tension of a muteness desperately striving for utterance He waited listened in a rigidity of which he was suddenly ashamed ridiculous He relaxed the memory of his own youth flooded back rapt him in visions scents sounds The premonitory whirring of the clock spring sounded once more followed by the slow increasing strokes Again His body wavered on the verge of sleep and he straightened himself sharply then he rose and putting back the Forgebook undressed

Susan at breakfast her shoulders wrapped in a serious toned pelerine said little Jasper Penny instinctively excluded her from a trivial conversation She was he decided paler than usual the shadows under her eyes were indigo He was filled with self condemnation Mrs Penny gazing at her with a beady discernment asked if her rest had been interrupted I am always an indifferent sleeper,' Susan Brundon replied evasively He followed her into the carriage that was to take her to the station at Jaffa and ignoring her slight gasp of protest grasped the reins held by the negro coachman However they proceeded over the short distance to the town without speech He was torn between a wish to spare her and the desire to urge his own purpose But more immediately he wanted to make secure the near hour of his seeing her again He asked finally Will you be at the Jannans this week or are visitors received at the Academy?

No she replied to the first and I have very little time between classes You see they fill the whole day tasks and pleasures It is difficult for me to — to talk on a generality of themes with callers

I have no intention of being diffuse he replied pointedly I could confine my entire conversation to one request —

Please she interrupted pitiably I am utterly wretched now The simplest gentility — she

paused but her wish was clear He restrained him self with difficulty Drifting slowly across the scattered roofs of the town was the leaden smoke of his mills and fires as they drove into the main street the thin crash of his iron was audible Men everywhere bowed to him with marked respect But the woman at his side sat erect drawn away from him unmoved by all that, to the world he was There was an appalling quality in her aloofness from what materially he might advance in extenuation the things so generally potent here were no more than slag He searched within for what might bend influence her for whatever he might have of value in her eyes He found nothing It was a novel and painful experience and it bred in him a certain anger he became merely stubborn He declared to himself with an oath that he would gain her and he pulled up his horses viciously at the station rack Thi too hurt her she exclaimed faintly at the brutally drawn bits A man hurried forward to take her bag and then in a blowing of horn a har h exhaust of steam she was gone A last hurried impression o her delicate profile o a small pane of glass accompanied him back to Myrtle Forge There his mother regarded him with an open concern

Something s on your mind she declared I passed your door at midnight and there was light under it I ve often told you about sitting up late

I m getting along he replied lightly You

fail to do justice to the weight of my increasing majority But in a little you'll be astonished at my renewed youth" He became serious in speaking conscious of the new life Susan would must, bring into his existence

XVIII

SINCE he had declared himself so decidedly and at once no hesitation was possible he must he was aware move remorselessly forward in assault To sweep Susan Brundon into his desire overwhelm her defences — he called them prejudices but immediately after withdrew that term — offered the greatest the only promise of success An obliterating snow fell for the following thirty hours and a week went by in the readjustment to ordinary conditions of living and travel But at the end of that period Jasper Penny left Myrtle Forge for the city with a determined an almost confident mouth and a bright hard gaze Late afternoon he decided would be the best time for his appearance at the Academy And he western sky was a luminous bright red when he passed under the stripped uneasy branches of the willow trees to the school door

Miss Brundon s office rigorous as the corridor of a hospital had a table and uncompromising wooden chairs on a rectangle of bluish pink carpet a glowing round stove held a place on a square of gleaming embossed zinc while the remaining surfaces were scrubbed oak flooring and white calcimine A large

geographer s globe, a sphere of pale glazed yellow traced in violet and thin vermilion and cobalt rested on an involuted mahogany stand and a pile of text books covered in gay muslin made a single decisive note of colour

She kept him waiting he felt uneasily, a long while perhaps she had a class but he felt that that was not the reason for her delay When she finally appeared in soft brown merino with a deep fichu of old dark lace, and black ribbons she courageously held out a delightfully cool smooth hand 'At first, she said directly I thought it would be better not to see you at all Yet that wasn t genteel and I felt too that I must speak to you Even at the danger perhaps of trespassing into your privacy'

I have given you the absolute right to do that' he told her It will only bring me pleasure to—to suppose I interest you enough—'

Ah but you do she cried with clasping fingers It has made my work here very difficult the quiet has gone before echoes that I think every child must hear echoes from spaces and things that appall me Here you see I have lived so apart from others perhaps selfishly that I had grown accustomed to a false sense of peace Only lessons and little questions little hands It seems now that I have been outside of life itself in a cowardly seclusion Yet it had always been that way I didn t know" Her face was deeply troubled the clear depths of her eyes held a new questioning doubt

It s because of that mainly I ask you to marry me he replied standing before the table at which unconsciously she had taken her place it is because of your astonishing purity You are so beautiful and this quiet peace — you must have it all your life it is the air the garden air for you to flower in I can give it to you miles of it farther than you can see All that you care for heaped about you But not that only he insisted for I realized that no one lives to whom such things are less I can give you something more not to be talked about whatever my life has been it has at least brought me to your feet I have learned for you that there is a thing men must have God knows exactly what — a craving to be satisfied a — a reaching And that itself the knowledge of such need is not without value Because of it I again and shall again if necessary ask you to marry me

She replied in a low voice You must marry the child s mother For the first time she avoided him bright blood burned in her cheeks a hand on the edge of the table was straining white A sudden feeling of helplessness came over him with behind it the ever present edge of anger of impatience He took a step forward as if to crush by sheer insistence her opposition but he stopped He lost entirely the sense of her fragile physical being she seemed only a spirit shining and high and insuperably lovely Then all feeling was lost but the realization that he could not — in any true sense —

live without her 'Susan,' he said, leaning forward 'you must marry me Do you care for me at all?'

Her breast rose and fell under the delicate contour of her wool gown "The child's mother' she repeated 'you should marry her How can you do differently? What can it matter if I care about you? She raised a miserable face "How can I?' she asked

He could think of no other answer than to repeat his supreme necessity for her He struggled to tell her that this was an altogether different man from Essie Scofield's companion but his words were unconvincing limited by the inhibition of custom A transparent dusk deepened in the room accompanied by a pause only broken by the faint explosions of the soft coal The power of persuasion of speech appeared to have left him There must be some convincing thing to say some last all powerful argument It eluded him The exasperation returned, spreading through his being

Surely' she said laboriously 'there is only one course for you for us all

'I'll never marry Essie Scofield!' he declared bluntly His voice was unexpectedly loud, unpleasant and it surprised him only less than Susan Brundon She drew back and the colour sank from her cheeks an increasing fear of him was visible 'In the first place' he continued 'Essie probably wouldn't hear of it And if I managed that it would

be only to make a private hell for us both It would not it couldn t last a month There is nothing magical in marriage itself there s no general salvation in it nothing to change a man or woman Why by heaven that s what you have taught me that is the heart of my wanting you You must feel it to understand He circled the table and laid a hand on the back of her chair Susan

Her head was bowed and he could see only her smooth dark bands of hair and the whiteness of her neck Susan he said again A second wrong will not cure the first If one was inexcusable the other would be fatal Married — to some one else with yourself always before me — surely you must see the impossibility of that And am I to come to nothing eternally fail because of the past? Isn t there any escape any hope any possibility? You don t realize how very much will go down with me I am a man in the middle of life and haven t the time the elasticity of youth A few more years to the descent But with you they could be splendidly useful happy happy I think for us both I know that a great many people would say as you have but it is wrong in every aspect absolutely hopeless Essie s values are totally different from yours she has her own necessities one measure will not do for all women

She rose and stood facing him very near her crinoline swaying against him and said blindly You shall marry her

I ll be damned if I do Jasper Penny asserted I will marry you you he whispered with his lips against the fineness of her ear Her hands were on his shoulders but she neither drew herself into his embrace nor repulsed him He wanted to crush her softness in his arms to kiss her still face into acquiescence The quality the kind of his need made it impossible She slipped back without a sound into her chair drooping forward over the table

A sharp pity invaded him holding him back from her silencing the flow of his reasoning and appeal It defeated in the stirring tenderness of its consideration his purpose He could not continue tormenting her racking her delicate taut sensibilities by a hard insistence He withdrew quietly to where his hat and stick rested on a chair and gathered them up Still she didn t move raise her head break the low fumbling of the soft coal He could no longer distinguish her clearly she was blurring in a dusk deeping so imperceptibly that it seemed a gradual failing of his vision The geographer s globe appeared to sway slightly like a balloon tied to a string the gay muslin of the piled text books had lost their designs Suddenly the room without motion the approaching night the desirable presence of the woman growing more immaterial more shadow like to elude his reaching hands presented a symbol an epitome of himself Day fading swiftly into dark dissolving the realities of table and flesh and

floor leaving only the hunger the insuperable inner necessity and sense of loss

' Good bye he breathed Jasper Penny saw that she raised her head he caught the glimmering pallor of her face But she said nothing and sank back into the *crumpled position on the table* He went out closing the door of the office shutting her into the loneliness of her resolve her insistence

In the familiar rooms at Sanderson s Hotel he revolved again and again all that she had said For a little he even endeavoured to inspect calmly the possibility of a marriage with Essie Scofield Steeped in Susan s spirit he thought of it as a reparation to Eunice perhaps to Essie but more certainly to an essence within himself But immediately he saw the futility of such a course the inexorable logic of existence could not be so easily placated its rhyming of cause and effect defeated All that he had told Susan Brundon recurred strengthened to an immovable conviction The thought of marrying Essie was intolerable farcical to the woman herself it would mean utter boredom. Such a thing must lead inevitably to a greater misfortune than any of the past Susan in her resplendent ignorance of facts failed to realize the impossibility of what she upheld No no it was out of the question

He wondered if he had progressed in the other his supreme wish And he felt with a stirring of blood that he had Susan cared for him her action had made that plain That was a tremendous advan

tage with another he would have thought it con clusive but not — not quite with Susan Brundon He had a deep regard for her determination, so sur prising in the midst of her fragility Yet, if pity had not prevented him this afternoon, in her office he might have forced her to a sharper realization of a more earthly need the ache for sympathy con solation, the imperative cry of self That was his greatest difficulty to overcome her lifelong habit of thinking of others before herself Such he knew was the root of her appeal for Essie rather than a cold dogmatic conception Self-effacement

At this a restive state followed personally he had no confidence in the sacrifice of individual aims and happiness Any course of that sort he told him self, in the management of his practical affairs, would have resulted in his failure There were a hundred men in the country plotting for his over throw anxious to take his position scheming to un dersell him to discover the secret of the quality of his iron rails Others he had deliberately necessarily ruined No good would have been served by his stepping aside allowing smaller men to flourish and annoy him cut down his production by inconsider able sales He and his family had built a great yes and beneficial industry by ruthlessly beating out a broad and broader way for their progress It was needful to gaze fixedly at the end desirable and move in the straightest line possible

Susan stopped by the way A thousand little acts

of alleviation at best temporary interrupted her living Children not hers dragged at her skirt How much better for her to have a child of her own Their child! A great deal that had been vague in his thoughts became concrete at that last period not *only the possible succession of the iron* but the comprehension that a child now before the increasing sterility of multiplying years would be an image of all his inmost craving and which must else be lost

Eunice was different Pity mingled with a rigid sense of his duty and a faint accent of parenthood comprehended his feeling for her He stated this to himself clearly admitting what delinquency it carried It was simply, an incontrovertible fact and it was his habit to meet such things squarely A black Penny he had no impulse to see existence in imposed sentimental or formally moral conceptions From all this he returned with a feeling of delight to his personal longing for Susan Brundon he saw her bowed over the table in an exhaustion almost an attitude of surrender A slender pliable figure in soft merino and lace He saw her beyond the candles of Graham Jannan s supper table a rose geranium at her breast The motto of the bon bon partially returned

nge du ci l je t aime!
" l bon heur supreme!

XIX

IN the morning he walked over to Stephen Jannan s office on Fourth Street The day was unexpectedly warm and a mist rose about the wet bricks of the city He proceeded directly into Stephen s private enclosure I was about to write you the latter stated It s well enough for you to direct Mrs Scofield to confine her pleas to me and comparatively simple to picture her drawing a quarterly sum in an orderly manner but how you are going to realize that happy conception is increasingly beyond me I have to point out to her daily — a great nuisance it is — that she cannot have her income before it is due Heaven knows what she has done with the other money in so short a while She hasn t moved apparently increased her establishment at your direction the bills were settled and heaven knows she had no reluctance in presenting all that were permissible and a number doubtful There is of course one probability

Jasper Penny s thoughts returned to the stony handsome youth he had seen in the company of Essie's friends to the insinuations of the woman who had been removed protesting her superiority and warning him against a tailor s dummy Well it was no longer his affair what Essie did with her

money what in her affections remained unimpaired Rather it was reassuring that she had so promptly found solace it enlarged his own feeling of freedom It got worse yesterday Stephen Jannan continued she came to the office insisted on seeing me Luckily I was busy with a mastership that kept me over three hours But she left I was told with the air of one soon to return She was brandied with purpose There is no end Jasper to what I am prepared to do for you but my dear fellow neither of us can have this She wept My young gentlemen were pierced with sympathetic curiosity You must realize Jasper that you are not a sparrow to float unnoticed from ledge to ledge

An angry impotence seized Jasper Penny He was tempted to have Stephen Jannan turn over to Essie at once a conclusive sum of money That would put an end to any communication between them provide her with the power of self gratification which for Essie Scofield spelled forgetfulness For a little he was obliged wearily to add Together with such a young man as he had seen in her house her capacity for expenditure would be limitless She would come back to him with fresh demands perhaps at an inconceivably awkward time in a calculated hysteria — he had cause to know — surprisingly loud and convincing Susan must be absolutely secured against that possibility He could not help but think of the latter as yielding in the end married to him

He gazed at Stephen Jannan in a sombre perplexity A nuisance" the other nodded 'Only time I suppose and the most rigid adherence to your statements will convince the lady of what she may expect In the meanwhile frankly we had better put it in some other hands not so much on my account as your own — the sympathetic young gentlemen, you see That can be easily arranged'

Jasper Penny was not thinking of the material Essie the present concrete problem but he was once more absorbed in the manner in which her influence followed apparently shaped his existence He was again appalled by the vitality of the past the phrase itself was an error there was no past All that had gone that was to come met ceaselessly in the present a confusion of hope and regret It was evident that he would have to see Essie again and explain that what she had from him depended entirely on her reciprocal attitude This could only be satisfactory in person He would go to her at once to-day An enormous reluctance to enter her house again possessed him The mere act had the aspect of an acknowledgment of her continued potency, her influence over him He put it off as long as possible and it was past five when he finally walked slowly toward her door

She was in and he saw on the hall stand a silk hat and overcoat cut in an extreme of current fashion The servant preceded him above toward the room usual for casual gatherings and he heard a

sudden low murmur expostulation follow the an nouncement of his name Essie Scofield appeared at the top of the stairs Come up she said in a hesitating sullen voice He mounted without reply As he had expected Daniel Cul er was present and rose to greet him negligently from a lounging atti tude on the sofa His coat cut back to the knees was relentlessly tapered the collar enormously rolled and revered and a white Marseilles waistcoat bore black spots as large as a Bolivian half dollar while a black scarf it was called the Du Casses fell in an avalanche of ruffles He moved toward the door fitting his coat carefully about his slim waist I m away Essie he proclaimed

When will you come again Daniel? she asked with an oppressive humility She gazed at Jasper Penny with a momentary delay then with an utter disregard of his presence laid her hands on the younger man s shoulders Soon she begged Obviously ill at ease he abruptly released himself I don t care she cried defiantly I ll tell the whole world you are the sweetest man in it Jasper's nothing to me nor I to him And I m not afraid of him of what he might threaten either Stay Dan iel and you ll see I will look out for us Dan

Her unexpected frankness was inevitably followed by an awkward silence Daniel Culser finally cursed below his breath avoiding Jasper s cold inquiring gaze I m glad I said it Essie proceeded now he knows how things are She went up again to

the younger and laid a clinging arm about his shoulders I m mad about you Daniel you know it there s nothing I wouldn t do for you give you if I could Isn t he beautiful? she fatuously demanded of Jasper Penny

' You are making a *fool* of yourself and me ' the subject of her adulation *roughly* declared He removed her arm so forcibly that the scarlet print of his fingers was visible on her soft dead white skin

Probably you have gone and spoiled everything And remember what I said I am a man of my word

Jasper Penny *dryly thought* that the *term man* was singularly *inappropriate* in *any* connection with the meticulously garbed figure before him I sie would have a difficult time with that stony youth She regarded him with eyes of *idolatry* drawing her *fingers* over the sleeve impatiently held *aside from* her touch ' I m *going* he stated *once* more impolitely but she barred him at the door I want you to stay she cried excitedly ' hear what I am going to say what I am going to do for you ' She advanced toward Jasper Penny I asked that Jannan for more *money* because I had *given* Daniel all I had and I wanted still more *to give* him I ll demand things all my life for him everything I have is his She gasped at the verge of an emotional *outburst* Her heart pounded *unsteadily beneath* an adventitious lace *covering* her *face* was leaden with *startling* daubs of vermilion paint " Give me

a great deal of money now at once so that I can go to Daniel with my hands full

That is why I came here Jasper Penny replied to tell you that you must not use up your income at once on the first week almost of its pay ment because you will be able to get no more until another instalment is due I haven t the slightest interest in where your money goes it is absolutely your own but I cannot have you after it every second day The administration will be put in a different quarter rigidly dispensed and any con tinued inopportunities will only result in difficulties for yourself

She cursed him in a gasping spent breath Essie looked ill he thought Daniel Culver listening at the door made a movement to leave but the woman prevented him hanging about his neck No! No! she exclaimed It will be all right I can get it more Be patient Jasper Penny walked stiffly to the exit where he paused at the point of repeating his warning Essie Scofield was lifting a quivering tear drenched face to the vexation of the fashionable youth He was attempting to repulse her but she held him with a desperation of feeling The elder descended the stairs without further speech

Outside the warmth of the day had continued into dusk The mist had thickened above which in a momentary rift he could see the stars swimming in removed constellations He was wrapped in an utter

loathing of the scene through which he had passed his undeniable part in it It was all hideous beyond words His late need his sense of void and illimitable longing tormented him ceaselessly He was sick with rebellion against life an affair of cunning traps and mud and fog Above the obscured and huddled odium of the city the distances were clear serene Above the degradation Susan A tyrannical desire to see her possessed him, an absolute necessity for the purification of her mere presence Unconsciously he quickened his step charged with purpose but he couldn t go to the Academy now it was six o clock He must delay an hour at least Habit prompted him to a supper which he left untried on its plates the lighting of a cigar quickly cold forgot At seven he hurried resolutely over the dark streets with the dim luminosity of occasional gas lamps floating on the unstirring white gloom The bricks under foot were soggy and the curved sign above her entrance the bare willows, dropped a pattering moisture

She saw him immediately not in the familiar office but in a hall laid with cold matting and nearly filled by a stairway lit with a lamp at the further end

I am sorry ' she told him I have no place to take you The rhetoric mistress is correcting papers there" she indicated the shut door He made no immediate answer content to gaze at her sensitive appealing countenance ' It is so warm" she said finally colouring at his intentness, "and I

have been indoors all day I might get my things We could perhaps a walk she spoke rapidly her head bent from him She drew back then hesitated ' Very well he replied Susan disappeared but she quickly returned in a little violet bonnet *bound and tied with black and a dark azure* velvet cloak furred at her wrists and throat She held a muff doubtfully but in the end took it with her

Outside the mist and night enveloped them in a close damp veil They turned silently to the right passing the narrow mouth of Currant Alley and Quince Street beyond The bricks became precarious and gave place to a walk of boards the corners about a broad muddy way were built up but farther on the dwellings were scattered — lighted windows showed dimly behind bare catalpas iron fences enclosed orderly patches between sodden flats gas lamps grew fewer

A deep all pervading contentment surrounded Jasper Penny an unreasoning happy warmth He said nothing his stick now striking on the boards now sinking into earth and gazed down at Susan her face hid by the rim of her bonnet This companionship was the best all that life had to offer He felt no need to importune her about the future their marriage curiously it seemed as though they had been married and were walking in the security the peace of a valid and enduring bond There was no necessity for talk laborious explanation

periods infinitely more empty than this silence They walked as close to each other as her skirt would permit and at times her muff, swinging on a wrist, would brush softly against him How strangely different the actual values of existence were from the emphasized trite moments and emotions In the middle of his life at the point of his greatest capability for experience, his most transcendent happiness came from the present the deliberate unquestioning walk with Susan the aimless progress through an invisible city and under a masked clear heaven of star No remembered thrill compared with it, reached the same height, achieved a similar dignity of consummation

The way became more uneven low clustered sheds rose out of the darkness against a deeper black beyond and they came to the river The bank was marshy but a track of pounded oyster shells visible against the mud led to a wharf extending into the solid voiceless flow of the water Jasper Penny stood with Susan gazing into the blanketing gloom A wan disintegrated radiance shone from a riding light in the rigging of a vessel and a passing warm blur flattened over the wet deck as a lantern was carried forward No other lights and no movement rose from the river no sound was audible at their back The city from the evidence of Jasper Penny's sensibilities did not exist it had fallen out of his consciousness suddenly its bricked miles, its involved life stilled or hectic stealthy in the dark,

seemed a thing temporary adventitious he had an extraordinary feeling of sharing in a permanence a continuity outlasting stone iron human tradition He had been swept he thought into a movement where centuries were but the fretful ticking of seconds Outside death he said fantastically unconsciously aloud A remarkable sentence recurred to him the most profound he told himself ever written Before he was I am Its vast implications easily evaded his finite mind just as the essence of his present rapture — it was no less — lay beyond his grasp He lingered over it gave it up returned to Susan

Wonderful she said gravely with a comprehensive wave of her muff And her simplicity thrilled him the more with the knowledge that she shared his feeling She drew up the fur collar of her cloak shivered and in the wordless harmony that pervaded them they turned and retraced their way

The rhetoric mistress had left the office with a low turned lamp and Jasper Penny stopped taking the furred wrap from Susan s shoulders She slowly untied the velvet strings of her bonnet and laid it on the table She extended her hands toward him and taking their cool slightness he drew her to him She rested with the fragrance of her cheek against his face with her hand pressed to his breast They stood motionless he closed his eyes and she was gone He was confused in the dimness empty except for him

self and fumbled with his gloves Susan s wrap lay limply over a chair the damp bonnet ribbons trailed toward the floor He looked slowly about noting every object — a pile of folded yellow papers the stove the globe bearing a quiver of light on its var nished surface

The willow trees and board above the entrance were dripping ceaselessly the lights of the city in creasing at its centre like the discs of floating sun flowers If he slept he was unaware of it the magic joy so equally penetrated his waking and sub conscious hours the feeling of an elevation higher than years and mountains was so strong The morn ing he found was again cold and clear He must go out to Jaffa where new blast machines demanded attention but the day after —

His thoughts were broken by a sharp rap on the outer door Mr Stephen Jannan was below and demanded to see him immediately Stephen's ap pearance at the hotel at that early hour, he recog nized was unusual But a glance at his cousin s serious aspect showed him at once that the reason was urgent Stephen Jannan as customary was particularly garbed and yet he had an expression of haste disturbance He said at once in the bed room where Jasper Penny was folding his scarf

'That young waster Culser Daniel Culser was shot and killed in Mrs Scofield s house last evening

The ends of the scarf fell neglected over the soft,

cambric frills of his shirt Jasper Penny swallowed dryly ' At what time? he asked

He was seen in the Old White Bear Tavern at about seven then apparently he went back to the woman s The servant said he found the body at something past nine and that there had been no other caller but yourself

His hearer expressed a deep involuntary relief 'I was there late in the afternoon he acknowledged but I left around six Stephen Jannan too showed a sudden relaxation I have already sent a message to the Mayor he continued confident that you would clear yourself without delay Mrs Scofield s history is of course known to the police. You have only to establish your alibi she Essie Scofield can t be found for the moment She may have taken an early stage out of the city but it is probable that she has only moved into another police district Just where were you Jasper?

The latter said stupidly Walking with Susan Brundon

A swiftly augmented concern gathered on Stephen Jannan s countenance You were walking with Susan he repeated incredulously Yes Jasper asserted with a sharp inner dread ' You don t know but I want to marry her Stephen Jannan faced him with an exclamation of anger You want to marry her and in consequence drag her Susan into the dirtiest affair the city is like to know

for years Susan Brundon, with her Academy all she has all her labour destroyed ruined pulled to pieces by slanderous tongues! By God Jasper, what a beast you look! The most delicate woman alive the one farthest from just this sort of muck being sworn in the Mayor's office testifying in an obscene murder case before the Sheriff and Constable and heaven knows what police and vilely curious!

A sickening feeling of utter destruction seized on Jasper Penny, a dropping of his entire being from the heights of yesterday to the last degradation He felt the blood leave his heart and pound dizzily in his brain and then recede followed by an icy coldness, a wavering of the commonplace objects of the room He raised his fingers to his collar stared with burning eyes at Stephen Jannan "Everything spoiled the latter said again "her pupils will positively be taken from her at once by all the nice females Her name will be pronounced smiled over in every despicable quarter of the city printed in the daily sheets I—I can t forgive you for this Susan our especial joy!"

Jasper Penny saw in a flash as vivid and remorseless as a stab of lightning that this was all true The fatality of the past sweeping forward in a black strangling tide had overtaken not only himself but Susan too Susan in soft merino in an azure velvet cloak her face against his "I shall go away at once he said hoarsely "I ll never ap-

pear and they can think what they will Then there will be no necessity for her to come forward She shall be sparcd that no matter what it costs

Romantic and youthful folly Jannan declared loud sounding and useless How little you under stand Susan — immediately it is known Cul er was killed between seven and nine whether vou stay or go she will come forward with the truth free you from any suspicion I tell you every detail will be canvassed familiar to the boys on the street A man important as yourself with all your industries and money and such salacity together with Susan Brundon will make a pretty story If I had a chance Jasper I m almost certain I d sacrifice you without a quiver How could you? Susan Brun don! Never telling her —

On the contrary she knew everything I am not so low as you seem to think

That has no importance now! Stephen Jannan exclaimed impatiently All that matters is to make it as easy as possible for her I have I think enough position influence to keep the dregs out But there will be enough present even then Dam nable insinuations winks cross-questioning

His excitement faded before the exigencies of the unavoidable situation he became cold logical legal Jasper P nny listened standing to his in tructions th exact forecasting of every move probable at the hearing in the Mayor s chamber After that Stephen added we can face the problem of Susan s

future She thinks tremendously of her school It will fall to pieces in her hands There can be no question of material assistance refused her own brother

Now understand — stay in these rooms until I send for you See no one I ll get on, go to Susan The thing itself should be short her character will assist you there What a mess you have made of living Jasper

XX

IN the silence of the sitting room Jasper Penny heard diverse and yet mingled inner voices Essie s younger, exuberant periods her joy at presents of gold and jewelled trifles changing ris ing shrilly to her last imploring sobs her frantic embrace of the man that beyond any doubt she had herself killed Running through this were the strains of a quadrille the light sliding of dancing feet and the sound of a low diffident voice Susan Brundon at the Jannans ball The voice continued in a dif ferent surrounding and woven about it was the thin complaint of a child of Eunice taken against her will from the Academy These three I ssie and Susan and Eunice combined now one rising above the other yet inexplicably always the same Back of them were other less poignant echoes flashes of place impressions of associated heat or cold dark ness or light

He saw the features of Howat Penny in the can vas by Gustavus Hesselius regarding him out of a lost youth he recalled and again experienced the sense of Howat s nearness integral with himself merging into his own youth no less surely lost yet enduring His mother joined the immaterial com

pany accents rigid with pride in him And penetrating binding all was the dull beat of the trip hammer at Myrtle Forge He had mechanically finished dressing and stood absently twisting the drapery at a window A fine tracery of lines had suddenly appeared about his eyes the cold rays of the winter sun streaming over his erect figure accentuated the patches of grey plentiful in his hair

He saw on the street below a parade of firemen in scarlet tunics and brass helmets dragging a glittering engine The men walked evenly abreast at cross ropes A leader blew a brilliant fanfare on an embossed silver horn Women passed foreshortened into circular bells of colour draped with gay pelerines and rich India shawls He saw all and nothing The horn of the firemen sounded without meaning on his distracted hearing The flood of his suffering rose darkly oppressing his heart choking his breath Perhaps if as he had desired he had gone away Susan would be spared But Stephen was right nothing could keep her from the pronouncement of the words that would free him and bind herself in intolerable ill Her uprightness was terrible It would take her fearful but determined into the pits of any hell His hands slowly clenched his muscles tightened in a spasm of anguish God why hadn t he recognized the desperation in Essie s quivering face! It would have been already too late he added in thought it went back back—

A knock sounded discreetly on the door and

opening it he saw a young man remembered as a law student in Stephen s office They are ready for you sir at the City Hall he stated in an over emphasized professional calm

XXI

THE restrained curiosity and inaudible comments which greeted his passage through the lower floor of the hotel gave place to a livelier interest when he was readily recognized on the street The news of the murder had evidently already become city property He was indicated to individuals unaware of his identity with a rapid sketch of the crime of fabulous ascribed possessions and hinted oriental indulgence He strode on rapidly his shoulders squared his expression contemptuous challenging but within he was possessed by an apprehension increasing at every step It was not fortunately far from Sanderson s Hotel to the City Hall west on Chestnut Street they reached their destination at the following corner The loungers from the trees before the State House had gathered with an increasing mob aware of the hearing within at the entrance to the municipal offices The windows on either side of the marble steps were crowded with faces ribald or blank or censorious and Jasper Penny had to force his way into the building He tried to recall if there was another more private ingress through which Susan might be taken but his thoughts evaded every dis

cipline they whirled in a feverish course about the sole fact of the public degradation he had brought on Susan Brundon They passed the doors of civic departments he saw their signs — Water City Treasurer and then entered the Mayor s chamber

The latter was seated at a table facing the room with his back to a wide window opening on the blank brick wall of the Philosophical Society building and at one side the High Constable of the district in which the murder had been committed was conversing with the Sheriff Beside them Jasper Penny saw there were only some clerks present and three policemen The Mayor spoke equably to the Ironmaster directed a chair placed for his convenience and resumed the inspection of a number of reports He had a gaunt tight lipped face framed in luxuriant whiskers a severely moral aspect oddly contradicted by trousers of tremendous sporting plaid a waistcoat of green buckskin cassimere while his silk hat held a rakish forward angle The Constable and Sheriff punctuated their converse by prodigious and dexterous spitting into a dangerously far receptacle and the clerks and police murmured together The Mayor finally glancing at a watch enamelled Jasper Penny saw with a fav of the ballet spoke to the room in general Ten and past Well! Well! Where are the others? Who is to come still Hoffernan?

'Mr Jannan sir and a witness a clerk answered The other gazed at the paper before him

"Susan Brundon" he read in a loud, uncompromising tone Jasper Penny s eyes narrowed belligerently he would see that these pothouse politicians gave Susan every consideration possible He was with Stephen a far from negligible force in the city elections School mistress the Mayor read on Never heard of her or her school Ah —' Stephen Jannan had entered with Susan

Jasper rose as she came forward and the Mayor had the grace to remove his hat She wore he saw the familiar dress of wool with a sober fringed black silk mantle, black gloves and an inconspicuous bonnet She met his harried gaze and smiled but beneath her greeting he was aware of a supreme tension There was, however no perceptible nervousness in the manner of her accepting an indicated place she sat with her hands quietly folded in her lap the mantle drooping back over the chair Stephen Jannan facing the Mayor made a concise statement in a cold, deliberate voice I now propose to show your honour ' he finished that between the hours in which Daniel Culser is said to have been shot to death my client was peacefully in the company of Miss Brundon strolling in an opposite quarter of the city

Hoffernan the Mayor pronounced waving toward the seated woman The clerk advanced with a Bible and rising Susan followed the words of the oath in a low clear voice To Jasper Penny the occasion seemed intolerably prolonged, filled with

needless detail Never had Susan Brundon appeared more utterly desirable never had his need to protect shield her been stronger He — protect her he added bitterly rather he had betrayed her dragged her immaculate sweetness down into the foul atmosphere of a criminal hearing His attention fastening on the trivialities of the interior removed him in a species of self hypnotism from the actualities of the scene He heard as if from a distance the questioning of the Mayor At what time exactly did you say? How did you know that? Susan said I saw the clock at the back of the hall I noticed it because I wondered if the younger children had retired

You say you walked with Mr Penny — where?

How long did you remain at the river? No way of knowing Seemed surprisingly short I ll venture Why didn t Stephen put an end to such ill timed jocularity? And Mr Penny had spoken to you of his — his relations with Mrs Scofield the woman in whose house Culser was killed Did he refer to her on this particular evening standing by the river s brink? Susan replied in the negative Did he seem ill at ease worried about anything? Was he hurried in manner?

To all of this Susan Brundon answered no in a voice that constantly grew lower but which never faltered hesitated The Mayor turned aside for a whispered consultation with the High Constable The former nodded Have you any — shall we

glanced about to see if his tacit surrender had been noticed — this lassitude creeping over him, the in difference was at last, the edge of the authentic shadow of age of decay it was the deadening of the sensibilities preceding death He banished it imme diately and all his desire, his need his sense of the horror of the past day surged back reanimated him, sent the blood strongly to its furthest confines But none the less a vague disturbing memory of the other lingered at the back of his perceptions he had a fresh realization of the necessity for him to make haste, to take at once — before the hateful anodyne of time had betrayed his vigour — what life still and so fully held

His desire for Susan increased to an intensity robbing it of a greater part of the early joy it had, now a fretful aspect drawing him into long and painfully minute rehearsals of his every contact with her and of the disgraceful publicity brought upon her by his past At the usual hour the hot wine appeared the glassful was pressed on Amity Mer ken his mother drank hers with the familiar audi ble satisfaction An old custom an old compound brought from Germany many years ago binding in its petty immortality distant times places beings He saw that his mother was noticeably less able than she had been the week before her hands fum bled at her knitting shook holding the glass Her lined face quivered as she said good night He bent and kissed a hot dry brow, conscious of the

blanched skull under her fading colour her ebbing warmth He had done this too — hastened her death she must have suffered inordinately in her prideful affection She said nothing beyond the repeated admonition that he must not sit up into the night

The next day he forced himself to read to the end the report of the murder in the *Ga ette* The ref erences to Susan Brundon were as scant as evidently Steph n Jannan could arrange but her name her Academy were invested with an odious publicity Jasper Penny saw again that he was a person of moment his part in the affair gave it a greatly aug mented importance Yet now the worst he told himself was at an end the publicity would recede after a decent interval he could see Susan

This mood was interrupted by an imperative com munication from Stephen — he must be in the oth er s office at eleven o clock to morrow Nothing more definite was said but Jasper Penny was not wholly surprised to see Essie Scofield huddled in a chair at the lawyer s table She had made an at tempt at the bravado of apparel but it had evi dently failed midway her hair hung loosely about a damp brow the strings of her bonnet were in dis array a shawl partially hid a bodice wrongly fas tened Her face was apathetic with leaden shad ows and dark lips ceaselessly twisting now drawn into a petulant line now drooping in childish impo- tence She glanced at him fleetly as he entered but

said nothing Robbed of the pretensions of pride, stripped of feminine subterfuge, she was appalling He involuntarily recalled the Essie who had swept him into a riot of emotion — a vivid and palpitating creature radiating the exuberance of careless health and youth She could not he calculated be beyond thirty seven now He abruptly ceased his speculation, turned from her with a feeling of impropriety Stephen Jannan said shortly

"Al Schimpf will be here It seemed to me he was the best man to retain It's obvious that I can t defend her You will of course, require everything possible done Essie Scofield shivered I don t want to go into court' she articulated ' and answer all the dreadful questions" There was a stir without and a hugely fat man in a black cape fastened with a silver chain and velvet collar entered Al Schimpf's face was so burdened with rolling chins that he disregarded the customary fashion of whiskers but a grizzled moustache lay above his well formed lips and an imperial divided his heavy aggressive chin He was, evidently, fully informed of the case before him for after saluting Jannan and Jasper Penny he seated himself directly before Essie Scofield fastening upon her an unwavering glacial gaze

Now pay attention" he proceeded at once ' I'll go over a few facts — this Daniel Culser you were in love with him no length you wouldn t go lost your senses completely and he — all he cared

about was the money he could wring out of you As soon as you were paid the sums that Mr Penny allowed you this Culser got it from you he took every cent and wanted more Said he would leave you unless you got hold of something really worth while Then of course you carried on promised to get him more and more said you could force a fortune from Mr Penny anything to keep the young man Hey? he demanded suddenly

The woman looked up with a haggard wonder an irrepressible shudder her hands raised and fell and she nodded dumbly

Then while Culser was in the house Mr Penny unexpectedly turned up and said — perhaps before Daniel himself — that you could expect nothing more and made it plain that he was not to be intimidated Daniel Culser was for leaving you didn t intend to hang around for a bloody little quarterly and when you realized that he meant or you thought he meant what he said you went crazy and shot him What! He got no response from her now she cowered away from him hiding behind an updrawn shoulder a fold of the shawl

But listen to this Al Schimpf shot at her leaning forward here s what happened and you must remember every fact

The fellow had been around th house day after day You had encouraged him at first but then you got frightened he beat you — hear that? — struck you with his fist and threatened worse if you

didn t go through old Penny's pocket for him He even hinted at something you might do together and then get away with a mint Culser was at it when Mr Penny called and took it up when he left, at about six o clock He said he wanted money bad debts were hounding him and he was going to get it out of Penny out of you There's where you said you would warn Jasper Penny and remember how he struck you in the back because you turned and it hurts yet — there up by the left shoulder the left shoulder the left! Then he had been drinking in your house and at a tavern he threatened to kill you if you didn t do what he wanted You honestly thought he d do it and snatched a pistol out of a table drawer and Do you understand? That s what happened and it s all you know Said he would kill you apparently commenced then and you acted in self protection Now repeat that"

She gazed at him in a trembling confusion But she objected he was only — he said Oh! I was afraid I d lose him' The lawyer moved closer to her his unwinking grey green eyes like slate "He said he d kill you he reiterated 'remember that if you don t want to hang He struck you where? After a long pause she replied haltingly 'In the back Al Schimpf nodded 'Good And he said you both were to get away with a mint. He told you it would be easy the old man would gladly buy silence and by heaven if he didn t —

Jasper Penny stonily watched the intolerable deg

radation of the woman bullied into the safety of a lie This was worse than anything that had gone before he fell deeper and deeper into a strangling humiliating self loathing Stephen Jannan s hand some countenance was fixed and pale one hand lay on the table empty and still In the silence between Schimpf s insistent periods Jasper Penny could hear Essie s sobbing inspirations he was unable to keep his gaze from her countenance jelly like and robbed of every trace of human dignity He wondered vaguely at an absence of any sense of responsibility for what Essie Scofield had become he felt that an attitude of self accusation of profound regret for the way *they had taken together should rest upon* him but the thought the effort were perfunctory obviously insincere If now he had a different per haps deeper sense of responsibility he had known nothing of it in the first months of his contact with her A different man he reiterated and one as faithfully representative as he was to-day But totally another men changed evolved progressed Jasper Penny was convinced that it was a progres sion but in a broad manner beyond all hope of his comprehension and entirely outside dogmatic good and evil The germ of it must have been in him from the first his burning necessity for Susan he told himself had been born in him laid dormant until yes — it had been stirred into activity by Essie Scofield by the revulsion which had followed that natural development.

He was suddenly conscious that Al Schimpf had ceased domineering Essie The lawyer swung about, facing them with an expression of commonplace satisfaction 'It s all in fine order' he declared 'I want if possible to study our jury through a preliminary case or so We shall of course surrender our client at once without making any difficulty about moving her from one police district to another I can produce a witness to the fact that this Culser openly said that he expected shortly to come into more money And he had dishonoured debts all about You will have to appear Mr Penny no way out of that, but our defence should go like a song Now Mrs Scofield I have a carriage outside

When they had gone Jasper Penny and Jannan sat in a lengthening silence Stephen s hand moved among the papers on the table the other drew a deep breath I regret this tremendou ly for you Stephen Jannan said at last He spoke with feeling his momentary anger at the entanglement of Susan vanished But it will pass Jasper You are too solid a man to be hurt permanently by private scandal And you have no concrete political position to invite mud slinging Yes it will drop out of mind and your iron will continue to support enterprise extension

But Susan Jasper Penny demanded 'what about her? Where is she?

With Graham at Shadrach She was badly torn and I insisted on her retreating for a week or

more There is a very *capable assistant* at the Academy It s too early to speak conclusively but I am afraid that Susan s usefulness is ended there Have you seen the cheaper sheets? Every one of course is buying them Rotten! The assistant I understand is anxious to procure the school and I am considering allowing her the capital Some thing might be arranged paying Susan an income If she would accept confoundly difficult to come about

' I am going to marry her Jasper Penny as serted once more

What was the initial trouble? ' the other asked tersely

Essie Stephen frowned

She would hit on that he agreed stand until the last gasp of some fantastic conception of right Jasper explained

She thinks I ought to marry Essie mostly on account of the child She likes me too Stephen I think I may tell you that Well I ll keep at her and at her In the end she will get tired of refusal The other shook his head doubtfully I ve known Susan a good many years and I have never seen her lose an ideal or even an idea yet

Jasper Penny rose Meanwhile I ll have to go through with this trial Thank God Susan has no part in it He warmly gripped Stephen s palm You re worth something in a life immovable Thank you Stephen'

XXII

IT was early in April an insidiously warm morning with the ailanthus trees in bud before the State House when Jasper Penny left the court room where Essie had been freed Provision had been made for her — she had had a severe collapse during the trial — and a feeling almost of renewed liberty of spirit permeated Jasper as with his overcoat on an arm he turned to the left and walked over the street in the blandly expanding mildness A train left shortly for Jaffa and he was bound directly home to Myrtle Forge, anxious to steep himself in the echo of the trip hammer mingled with the poignant harmony of spring sounds drifting from the farm and woods He was possessed by a sharpened hunger for all the — now recognized — beauty of the place of his allegiance and birth the serenity of the acres Gilbert Penny had beaten out of the wild of the Province He was astonishingly conscious of himself as a part of the whole Penny succession proud of Gilbert of Howat who had always so engaged his fancy of Casimir and Daniel, his own father Theirs was a good heritage their part of the earth the ring of their iron his particular characteristic of a black Penny formed a really splendid entity

The low horizontal branches of the beech tree on

the lawn older than the dwelling opposed a pleasant variety on the long façade built of stone with an appearance of dark pinkish malleability masking its obduracy His mother was awaiting him on the narrow portico and he at once told her of Essie s release They stood together gazing out across the turf faintly emerald over the public road at the grey solid group of farm buildings beyond The farmer s daughter in a white slip emerged against the barnyard and called the chickens in a high musical note scattering grain to a hysterical feathery mob The air was still with approaching twilight the sun slipped below the western trees and shadows gathered under the lilac bushes the sky was April green

Your father has been dead twelve years Gilda Penny said unexpectedly He looked down and saw that she was decrepit an old woman Her mouth had sunken her ears projected in dry folds from her scant strands of hair He recalled Daniel Barnes Penny the earliest memories of his mother a vigorous brown faced woman with alert black eyes quick stepping dictatorial in the sphere of her house and dependents One after the other like the sun they were slipping out of the sight of Myrtle Forge vanished and remained passed from falling hand to hand the unextinguished flame of life Gilda Penny was merging fast into the formless dark She clung with pathetically tense fingers to his arm as they turned into the house

He had ordered a carriage immediately after an early supper and informing his coachman of his wish to proceed alone drove quickly away through the dusk He was going to Shadrach Furnace to meet Susan for the first time since the unhappy occasion in the Mayor s chamber He had decided stifling his increasing impatience, not to see her until Essie s trial was over Susan had been at Graham Jannan s house for nine weeks Her sight he had learned had almost completely failed in a general exhaustion but, with rigorous care she had nearly recovered The Academy had been sold to the assistant mistress and there was an expressed uncertainty about Susan s near future It had however no existence in Jasper Penny's thoughts plans — she must marry him any other course would now be absurd The track from Myrtle Forge to the Furnace was bound into his every thought and association its familiarity he mused had been born in him his horses too took correctly without pressure every turning of the way The road mounted and then dropped between rounded hills to the clustering buildings where lighted pale yellow windows floated on the dusk crowned by the wide-flung radiance of the Furnace stack The air was potent in the valley with the indeterminate scent of budding earth — the premonitory fragrance of blossoms and hardly less delicate stars flowered whitely in blue space

He paused for a moment before entering Graham

Jannan s house saturated with the pastoral tran quillity listening to the flutter of wings under the eaves Then he went in They had finished supper but were lingering at the table with the candles guttering in an air from the open door His greet ing was simple and glad and without restraint Susan wore a dress like a white vapour sprigged with pale buds, her throat and arms bare She smiled the familiar hesitating smile met his ques tioning gaze with her undeviating courage Jasper Penny took a chair opposite her Little was said Peace deepened about his spirit.

Graham he saw had a new ruddiness of health he laid a shawl tenderly about his wife s shoulders and Jasper remembered that a birth was imminent Later he drifted with Susan to the door and they passed out into the obscurity beyond Even now he was reluctant to speak to break with importuni ties the serene mood All the iron making she spoke at last lovely I have stood night after night in the cast house watching the metal pour out in its glorious colours And when I wake I go to my window and see the reflections of the blast on the trees on the first leaves The charcoal burners come down like giants out of the mythology of the forest And when I first came there was a raccoon hunt with a *great stirring of* lanterns and barking dogs in the dark all lovely

It is yours he said bending over her You can come here at your will A house built And

Myrtle Forge, too whatever I have am' He paused but without reply, continued more rapidly 'It's over the — the misery of the past weeks the mistakes are dead they are paid Susan Now we may take what is left and make it as beautiful as possible After suffering reparation happiness is every one's due And I am certain I can make you happy'

A longer pause followed, in which he regarded her with an increasing anxiety Her face was turned away, her progress grew slower until they stood by the shadowy bulk of a small stone structure The door was open and it seemed to him that she looked within 'A store house' he explained Nothing was visible in the interior gloom but some obscure shapes bales piled against the walls and the scant tracery of a rude stair leading up to a greater blackness above She stopped as if arrested by his period laying a hand on the door frame

'Why don't you answer me Susan?' he proceeded 'You know that I want to marry you surely it is all right now Everything possible has been done A great deal of life remains Her answer was so low that it almost escaped him the faintest breath of pain of longing and regret 'I can't she whispered 'not with her the child I can't

That' he replied gently is a mistaken idea of responsibility, a needless sacrifice I could never

urge you into an injustice a wrong at last I have got above that what I want is the most reasonable thing imaginable the best in every conceivable way for yourself and — any other You are harming depriving no one You are taking nothing but your own what has been yours and only yours from the first moment I saw no — from my birth What has happened brought me in a straight road to you the long road I have never really left

I can t she said still again I want to Jasper Oh with a heart full of longing I am so tired that I would almost give the rest of my life for another secure hour with you And I would pay that to give you what you want what you should have But something stronger than I am more than all this holds me I can t forget that miserable woman nor her child and yours so thin and suspicious I am not good enough to be her mother myself even if I felt I had the right Inside of me I am quite wicked selfish I want my own But not with the other woman outside She d be looking in at the windows Jasper looking in at my heart I would hear her She leaned against her arm her face hid her shoulders trembling

The musty odour of the stores floated out and enveloped him He was suddenly annoyed Susan herself lost some of her beauty her radiance He muttered that she was merely stubborn blind to reality to necessity His attitude hardened and he commenced to argue in a low insistent voice She

made no reply, but remained supported in the doorway a vague form against the inner dark

You must change your mind,' he asserted you can t be eternally so foolish There is absolutely no question of my marrying Essie Scofield"

'I don t want you to really she admitted in an agonized whisper I shall never again ask you to do that Ah God how low I am"

He saw in an unsparing flash of comprehension that it was useless She would never marry him as long as the past stayed embodied actual to peer into their beings A return of his familiar irritability spleen possessed him You are too pure for this world he said brutally She turned and stood facing him meeting his scorn with an uplifted countenance A shifting reflection from the Furnace stack fell over her in a wan veil over the vaporous sprigged white of her dress her bare throat and arms her cheeks wet with tears Out of it her eyes wide with pain steadily met his angry scrutiny Out of it she smiled at him before the reflection died

XXIII

IN the warm subdued light of a double lamp with apricot glass shades Howat Penny was turning over the pages stiff with dry paste of an album filled with op ra programmes The date of the brief, precisely penned label on the black cover was 1883–84 it was the first of a number of such thick recording volumes he had gathered and the operas the casts were of absorbing interest At once a memento of the heroic period of American music and of his first manhood the faded crudely embellished strips of paper bearing names lyric tenors and sopranos of limpid bird like song long ago lost in rosy and nebulous clouds of fable and cherished *affection roused remembered pleasures* sharper than any calm actuality of to-day He paused with a quiet exclamation the single glass adroitly held in his left astigmatic eye fastened on the announcement of a famous evening a famous name His sense of the leaf before him blurred in the vivid memory of Patti singing Martha in the campaign brought by Mapleson in the old Academy of Music against the forces of the new Metropolitan Opera House He had been one of a conservative number that had supported the established opera

declaring heatedly that the Diva and Mapleson were an unapproachable musical combination before which the shoddier magnificence of its rival, erected practically in a few summer months, would speedily fade

Nevertheless he recalled, the widely heralded performance had been coolly received Patti although she had not perceptibly failed in voice had been unable to inspire the customary enthusiasm and the scene at the evening s end planned to express her overwhelming triumph and superiority, when the horses had been taken from her carriage and it had been dragged by hand to the portal of the Windsor Hotel, had been no better than perfunctory The wily Mapleson had arranged that beforehand Howat Penny realized with a faint, reminiscent smile on his severe lips — the enthusiastic mob had been coldly recruited at a price from the choristers Another memory of Patti and of that same performance flooded back — the dinner given her in the Brunswick He saw again the room where on a divan she had received her hosts the seventy or more men of fashion grouped in irreproachable black and white with her suave manager the inevitable tea rose in his lapel on a knee before Adelina kissing her hand The dinner had been laid in the ball room lit with a multitude of wax candles The features appearance of the more prominent men of Mahun Stetson and Daly and William Steinway were clear still The original plan had been to in

clude ladies at the dinner but the latter affecting outrage at the Diva s affair with the Marquis de Caux had refused to lend their countenance to the singer s occasion His smile broadened — this was so characteristic of New York in the eighties How different it had been but it was no better he added silently now

It was mid August and the air floating in through an open door was ladened with the richness of ultra luxuriant vegetation the persistent metallic whir ring of locusts the mechanical repetition of katydids One of the owls that inhabited the old willow tree be fore the house cried softly How different! He straightened up from the book open on his knees and the glass fell with a small clatter over his formal starched linen, swinging for an instant on its narrow ribbon The unwavering lamp light was deflected in green points through the emeralds of his studs

The thought of bygone gala nights of opera fas tened on him with a peculiar significance — suddenly they seemed symbolic of his lost youth Such tides of impassioned song such poignant lyric passion such tragic sacrifice and death were all in the ex travagant key of youth The very convention of opera the glorified unreality of its language the romantic impossibility of its colour the sparkling dress like the sparkling voices and blue gardens and gilt d halls were the authentic expression of the resplendent vagaries of early years

The winter of eighty three and four his first sea

son of New York music The autumn before he had returned from the five years spent in Europe, in Paris practically with Bundy Provost related to him by a marriage in the past generation, through the Jannans He had gone abroad immediately after his graduation as a lawyer and in the indolent culture of the five Parisian years he now realized he had permanently lost all hold on his profession At his return he had drifted imperceptibly into an existence of polite pleasure It had been different with Bundy he had gone into the banking house of Provost lately established in New York and with the extraordinary pertinacity and acumen sometimes developed by worldly and rich young men he had steadily risen to a place of financial importance An opening had of course been offered to Howat Penny when he had definitely decided not to settle in Philadelphia where the Pennys had always been associated and pursue the law And at first, he had occupied a desk in the Provost counting rooms But he had soon grown discontented he disliked routine and a clerk s condition and after two years of annoyed effort withdrew to lead a more congenial existence on a secure adequate income

It was a mistake he said aloud in a decided, clearly modulated voice gazing blankly into the warm stillness of the room It had come partly from his innate impatience with any inferior state whatever and part from the old inability o identify himself with the practicalities of exist

ence He had always viewed with distaste the apparently necessary compromises of successful living the struggle for money, commercial supremacy seemed unendurably ugly the jargon and subterfuges of financial competition beneath his exacting standard of personal dignity That had been his expression at the time — permeated by an impatient sense of superiority but now he felt that there was something essential lacking in himself An absence of proper balance Solely concerned with the appearance the insignificant surface of such efforts as Bundy Provost s their moving masculine spirit had evaded him Yes it had been a mistake He had missed the greatest pleasure of all that of accumulating power and influence of virile achievement

Well it was over now he was old his life his chance had gone and all that remained were memories of Patti smiling disdainfully in the flare of oil torches about her carriage the only concrete record of so many years the scrap books such as that on his knees

It had been an error yet there had been within him no choice no intimation of a different more desirable consummation Bundy had gone one way and himself another in obedience to forces beyond their understanding or control They had done briefly what they were There was no individual blame to attach no applause spare moralizing to append He returned to the pages before him to the

memories of the radiant Ambre and Marimon the sylvan echoes of Campanini singing Elvino

Now his recovered glass was intent on a programme of the rapidly successful Metropolitan forces of the new German Opera, with Seidl Krauss singing Elizabeth, and Brandt in *Fidelio* Even here after so long he vibrated again to the exquisite beauty of Lenore's constancy and love Then Dr Damrosch dead, the sonorous funeral in the Opera House That had been changed with the rest the baignoires were gone the tiers of boxes newly curved gone the chandeliers and Turkey red carpet and gold threaded brocade that had seemed the final expression of luxury Lehmann in the premier of *Tristan und Isolde* with the vast restrained enthusiasm and tensity when at the end of the third act Niemann bared his wounded breast Lames rise but that, and what followed were in successive books He closed the one under his hand

As the years drew nearer the present their features became larger more indistinct their music grew louder dissonant. He had retired further and further from an opera a life with which he was increasingly out of harmony Or rather, he added life moved away from the aging It was as if the surrounding affair became objective as if once a participant in a cast — a production however less than grand — he had been conducted to a seat somewhere in the midst of a great shadowy audience from which he looked out of the gloom at the bril

hant removed spectacle The final fact that had taken him from the setting of so many of his years had been the increasing expense of a discriminating existence in New York Again his di taste for any thing short of absolute nicety had dictated the form and conditions of his living When the situation of his rooms had definitely declined and the cost of possible locations — he could not endure a club — became prohibitive when his once adequate unaug mented income assumed the limitations of a mere suf ficiency and when too the old familiar figures the swells of his own period and acquaintance had van ished one by one with their vanishing halls of assem bly — he had retreated to the traditional place of his family He had gone back to the home of the Pennys in America

Not however to Myrtle Forge itself the true centre of his inheritance The house there had been uninhabited since his father s early years it was a closed and melancholy memento he had reani mated a comfortable stone dwelling at Shadrach Furnace its solid grey façade drawn out by two happy additions to the original small square It had been traditionally at first the house of the head furnacemen sometime after that perhaps a hundred years Graham Jannan newly married had lived there while occupied with the active manufac ture of iron and three summers back he Howat Penny the last Penny now had returned to the vicinity of Jaffa

XXIV

THE room in which he sat had two windows set in the deep recesses of heavy stone walls and three doors two leading into opposite rooms and the third opening without The double lamp stood on a low, gate legged table of fibrous time-blackened oak together with an orderly array of periodicals — the white typographical page of the *Saturday Review* under the dull rose of *The Living Age* and chocolate coloured bulk of the *Unpopular Gil Blas* the mid week *Boston Transcript* and yesterday s *New York Evening Post* The table bore, in addition a green morocco case of dominoes a mahogany box that in a recess mysteriously maintained a visible cigarette a study of Beethoven in French an outspread volume by Anatole France, *Jacques Tournebroche* in a handsome paper cover a set of copper ash trays and a dull red figurine holding within its few inches the deathless spirit of a heroic age An angle of the wall before him was filled by a white panelled fireplace, the mantel close against the ceiling and on the other side of a doorway, through which he could see Rudolph noiselessly preparing the dinner table was a swan like sofa in olive wood and pale yellow satin

from the Venice of the *ottocento* At his right, beyond a window mounted a tall austere secretary in waxed walnut and behind him, under the white chair rail bookcases extended across the width of the room Gustavus Hesselius' portrait of the first Howat Penny hung on a yellow painted wall his gilt braided major s facings still vivid his dark perceptible scorn undimmed There were too framed in oak a large photograph of Tamagno as Othello with a scrawled cordial message another of a graceful woman in the Page s costume of *Les Huguenots* signed Sempre Scalchi a water colour drawing by Jan Beers and a Victorian lithograph in powdery foliage and brick of *The Penny Rolling Mills Jaffa* A black blue rug from Myrtle Forge partly covered the broad oak boards of the floor and there was a comfortable variety of chairs —sturdy painted Dutch winged Windsors and a slatted Hunterstown rocker

Howat Penny s gaze wandered over the familiar furnishing come to him surviving the generations of his family or carefully procured for his individual dictates A sense of tranquillity of haven deepened about him Rudolph he inquired has Honduras gone for Miss Jannan?

The man stopped in the doorway answering in the affirmative He was slight almost fragile with close dark hair that stood up across his forehead and dry high coloured cheeks Rudolph hesitated with a handful of silver and then returned to his

task Mariana would be along immediately, Howat Penny thought He put the album aside and rose moving toward the door that led without He was a slender erect figure with little to indicate his age except the almost complete silvering of his hair — it had evidently been black — and a rigidity of body only apparent to a sharp scrutiny

A porch followed that length of the house and doubled the end, where he stood peering into the gathering dusk The old willow tree inhabited by the owls spread a delicate blurred silhouette across a darkened vista of shorn wheat fields filled in the hollows with woods and a lamp glimmered from a farm house on a hill to the left His lawn dropped to the public road the hedged enclosure swimming with fireflies and beyond he saw the wavering light shafts of his small motor returning from the insignificant flag station on the railroad a mile distant

The noise of the engine increased sliding into a lower gear on the short curve of the driveway and he met Mariana Jannan at the entrance directly into the dining room She insisted to his renewed discomfort on kissing him "It s wonderful here after the city she proclaimed "and I ve had to be in town three sweltering days I ll dress right away'

Honduras his coloured man as indispensable outside as Rudolph was in followed with her bag up the narrow flight of steps to the floor above He waited through he thought a reasonable interval and then

called An indistinguishable reply floated down mingled with the filling of a tub and another half hour passed before Mariana appeared in white chif fon securing a broad girdle of silver oak leaves about her slight waist ' Do you mind? she turned be fore him and with an impatience half assumed and half actual he fastened the last hooks of her dress

As you know he reminded her I don t attempt cocktails Will you have a gin and bitters?

She wouldn t frankly and they embarked on din ner in a pleasant unstrained silence Mariana was he realized the only person alive for whom he had a genuine warmth of affection She was a first cousin her Aunt Elizabeth had married James Penny his father but his fondness for her had no root in that fact It didn t for example extend to her brother Kingsfrere He speculat d again on the reason for her marked effect Mariana was not lovely as had been the charmers of his own day her features with the exception of her eyes were unremarkable And her eyes variably blue were only arresting because of their extraordinary intensity of vision their un quenchable and impertinent curiosity A girl abso lutely different from all his cheri hed mental images but for Howat Penny always potent always arous ing a response from his supercritical being stirring his aesthetic heart Everything he possessed — his pictures the albums the moderate income although she had little need of that — had been willed to her

It would be hers then just as it was practically now And he was aware that her feeling generously equalled his own

His speculation, penetrating deeper than customary rewarded him with the thought that she was unusual in the courage of her emotions That was it — the courage of her emotions! There was a total lack of any penurious trait, any ulterior thought of appraising herself against a possible advantageous barter She was never concerned with a conscious prudery in the arrangement of her skirt Mariana was aristocratic in the correct sense of the term a sense he realized now almost lost And he rated aristocracy of bearing higher than any other condition or fact

He wondered a little at her patent pleasure in visiting him an old man so frequently Hardly a month passed but that announced by telegram, she did not appear and stay over night or for a part of the week She would recount minutely the current gaiety of her polite existence He knew the names of her associates a number of them had been exhibited to him at Shadrach the location of their country places and what men temporarily monopolized her interest None of the latter had been serious He was selfishly glad of that and waited uneasily through her every visit until she assured him that her affections had not been possessed However this condition he knew must soon come to an

end Mariana was instinct with sex and a short while before he had sent his acknowledgment of her twenty sixth birthday

She sat occupied with salad against the cavernous depths of a fireplace that between the kitchen door and a built in cupboard filled the side of the dining room The long mantel above her head was ladened with the grey sheen of pewter and two uncommonly large fluted bowls of blue Stiegel glass In the centre of the table linen, the Sheffield and crystal and pictorial Staffordshire was a vivid expanse of rose geraniums She broke off a flower and pinned it with the diamond bar on her breast Howat she said to morrow s Saturday and I ve asked two people out until Sunday night Eliza Provost and a young man Do you mind?

Tell Rudolph he replied It was not until after dinner when they were playing sniff that he realized that she omitted the young man s name He intended to ask it, but his mind and hand hovering over an ivory domino he forgot Twenty he announced reaching for the scoring pad Oh hell Howat! she protested That s the game almost She emptied her coffee cup and speculatively fingered one of the thin cigars in the box at his hand It s the customary thing in Peru she observed pinching the end from the cigar and lighting it He watched her absently veiled in the fragrant bluish smoke Automatically his thoughts

returned to the women that at a breath of scandal had refused to attend the dinner to Patti So much changed the years fled like birds in a mist

I feel like a politician ' she told him " Eliza Provost would pat me on the back She s talking from a soap box on the street corners now winging men for such trifles as forced birth I m fond of Eliza she s got a splendid crust I wish you d get excited about my rights but your interest really goes no further than a hat from Camille Marchais You are deleterious Howat Isn't that a lovely word ' Which was the first double? ' He blocked and won the game Fifty five ' she announced ' and ninety five before I owe you a dollar and a half

She paid the debt promptly from a flexible gold mesh bag on the table then stooped and wandered among his books Howat Penny turned to yester day s *Evening Post* and Mariana settled beyond the lamp Outside the locusts were desperately shrill and the heavy ticking of an old clock grew audible

I don t like George Moore ' she exclaimed He raised surprised inquiring eyebrows " He is such a taster she added but particularized no more She sat, with the scarlet bound book clouded in the white chiffon of her lap gazing at the wall Her lips were parted and a brighter colour rose in her cheeks Her attitude her expression vaguely dis turbed him he had never seen her more warmly, dangerously alive. A new reluctance stopped the

question forming in his mind she seemed to have retreated from him ' Moore is a very great artist he said instead

' That s little to me she replied flippantly ris ing I think I ll go up and I almost think I will kiss you again " He grumbled a protest and watched her trail from the room the silver girdle and chiffon emphasizing her thin vigorous body the lamplight falling on her bare sharp shoulders Howat Penny had early acquired a habit of long hours and it was past one when he put aside his papers stood for a moment on the porch The fireflies were gone the locusts seemed farther away and the soft heavy flight of an owl rose from the warm grass

Below on the right he could vaguely see the broken bulk of what had been Shadrach Furnace the ruined shape of the past The Pennys no longer made iron His father had marked the last casting They no longer listened to the beat of the trip ham mer but to the light rhythm of a conductor s baton they heard in place of ringing metal a tenor s grace notes Soon they would hear nothing They went out for all time with himself It was fitting that the last true to their peculiar inheritance should be a black Penny He Howat was that — the ancient Welsh blood finally gathered in a cup of life before it was spilled

Old influences quickened within him but attenu ated they were no more than regrets They came

late to trouble his remnant of living He was like the Furnace, a sign of what had been yet, he thought in self extenuation he had brought no dis honour no dragging of the tradition through the muck of a public scandal Not that nor any thing else Now when it was absurd he was resent ful of the part he had played in life like a minor cracked voice he extended a former figure with a saving touch of humour importuning the director because he had not been cast in the great roles The night mist came up and brushed him he was con scious of a sudden chill, an aching of the wrists "Cracked he repeated aloud and retreated into the house where Rudolph gone up he put out the lights and stiffly retired

XXV

THEY accomplished little the following morning Mariana in a scant brown linen skirt a sheer waist through which were visible precarious incidentals and narrow black ribbon and the confoundedest green stockings he had ever seen lounged indolently in a canvas swing The heat increased in a reddish haze through which the sun poured like molten copper You d better come inside he said from the doorway the house shut up is quite comfortable. Within the damp of the old stone walls made a comparative coolness The shades were drawn down and they sat in an untimely twilight

When I think of how energetic Eliza will be Mariana asserted I am already overwhelmed But you never look hot Howat you are always beautiful' His flannels and straw-coloured silk coat were crisply ironed his hair his scarf and lustrous yellow shoes precise Howat, she continued almost anxiously you put a lot on, well—good form You think that the way a man knots his tie is tremendously significant—

Perhaps he returned cautiously A good many years have shown me that the right man usually wears the right things

'Couldn t that be just the smallest bit unfair? Aren t there after all droves of the right men in rubber collars? I don t know any' she added hastily that is not exactly the same But it seems to me that you have lived so exclusively in a certain atmosphere that you might have got blinded to — to other things

Perhaps' he said again complacently "I can only judge by my own feeling and experience Now Mapleson never was a finer conductor of opera — you didn t catch him in a pink tie in the evening And some of those others who failed in a couple of weeks I give you my word, dress shirts with forget menots

She regarded him with a frowning half closed vision It sounds wrong' she commented It s been your life of course" He grew resentful under her scrutiny the implied criticism A sudden suspicion entered his mind connected with her expression last evening the young man whose name he had omitted to ask His reluctance to question her returned But if Mariana had attached herself to some rowdy by heaven he would He fixed the glass in his eye and pretending to be occupied with a periodical studied her He realized that he would could do nothing She was a woman of determination and her father dead a very adequate income of her own His fondness for Mariana resided principally in a wish to see her free from the multitudinous snares that he designated in a group as common

He was fearful of her entanglement in the cheap implications of the undistinguished democracy more prevalent every year All that was notable charming in her he felt would be obliterated by trite connection he had no more patience for the conventional fulfilment of her life than he had for the thought of women voting Howat Penny saw Mariana complete fine in herself as the *Orpheo* of Christopher Gluck was fine and complete He preferred the contained artistry of such music to the cruder more popular and moral sounds

Early in the afternoon she went to her room although Honduras had no occasion to go to the station for considerably more than an hour explaining that she must dress Howat Penny sat with his palms on his white flannelled knees revolving now himself in the light of his aspirations for Mariana He wondered if in the absence of any sympathy for the mass of sentiment and living he was blind too to her greatest possibilities if in short he was a vicious influence Perhaps as the old were said to do he had hardened into a narrow and erroneous conception of values Such doubts were both disturbing and unusual ordinarily he never hesitated in the exact expression of his vigorously held opinions and prejudices he seldom relaxed the critical elevation of his standards He was he thought contemptuously growing soft senility was diluting his fibre blurring his inner vision

Nothing of this was visible as he rose on Mariana s

reappearance there was not a line relaxed his hand some dark profile was as pridefully clear as if it had been stamped on a bronze coin Mariana wore, simply blue with an amber veiling of tulle about her shoulders and a short skirt that gave her a marked youthful aspect She seemed ill at ease and avoided his gaze hurrying out to meet the motor as it noisily turned sharply in at the door Howat Penny heard Eliza Provost's short, impatient enunciation, and a rapid, masculine utterance Eliza entered a girl with a decided evenly pale face and brown eyes in a severe black linen suit and a small hat and extended a direct hand a slightly smiling greeting Mariana followed for a moment filling the doorway "We'll go up Eliza she said moving with the other to the stair a few feet distan A man followed into the house and Mariana half turned on the bottom step Howat' she proceeded hurriedly this is James Polder " Then she ascended with Eliza Provost

An expression of amazement deepening almost to dismay was momentarily visible on Howat Penny's countenance His face felt hot and there was an uncomfortable pressure in his throat such as might come from shock Surely Mariana wouldn t without warning him—! He was conscious of the necessity facing a tall spare young man with an intent expression of a polite phrase and he articulated an adequate something in a noticeably disturbed tone But of course he had made a mistake

James Polder's intensity increased concentrated in a gaze at once belligerent and eager He said

Then Miss Jannan didn't tell you It was a mistake It may be I am not exactly desirable here" his voice sharpened and he retreated a step toward the door

No Howat Penny replied 'she didn't He found himself studying a face at once youthful and lined a good jaw contradicted by a mouth already traced with discontent and yellow brown eyes kindling with a surprising energy of resentment 'You are Byron Polder's son? he said in a manner that carried its own affirmation 'Eunice Scofield's grandson

'Eunice Penny's' the other interjected Your own grandfather saw to that His hand rested in the doorway and he stopped Honduras carrying in the guests bags Howat Penny's poise rapidly returned Go right up Honduras he directed the Windmill room I think I had never seen you he said to James Polder as if in apology "But your father has been pointed out to me He waved the younger man into the room beyond and moved forward the cigarettes

James Polder took one with an evident relief in the commonplace act He struck a match and lit the cigarette with elaborate care Will you sit for a little? the elder proceeded Or perhaps you'd rather change at once I've no doubt it was sticky in the city

'Thank you perhaps I'd better — the last' Rudolph appeared and conducted the young man above Howat Penny sat suddenly his lips folded in a stubborn line Mariana had behaved outrageously she must be familiar with the whole, miserable past episode she had given him some very bad moments He had a personal bitterness toward that old unhappy affair the dereliction of his dead grandfather — it had been he had always felt largely responsible for his own course in life it had before his birth even formed his limitations, as it had those of his father

The latter had been the child of a dangerously late marriage a marriage from which time and delay had stripped both material potency and sustaining illusion Jasper Penny had been nearing fifty when his son was born and that act of deliberate sacrifice on the part of his wife entering middle age had imposed an inordinate amount of suffering on her last years Their child it was true had been of normal stature and lived to within a short space of a half century But then he had utterly collapsed died in three days from what had first appeared a slight cold and throughout his maturity he had been a man of feverish mind His disastrous blind struggle against the great, newly discovered iron deposits of the Middle West was characteristic of his ill balance And in his own Howat Penny's successive turn the latter told himself

again he had paid part of the price of his grand father s indulgence

It was incorporated in the Penny knowledge that Susan Brundon had refused to marry Jasper while the other woman was alive The latter had died some years after the disgraceful publicity of the murder and trial the wedding had then taken place but it seemed to Howat Penny to have been almost perfunctory Yes he had paid too in the negative philosophy the critical sterility of his existence He recognized this in one of the disconcerting flashes of perception that lately illuminated him as if from without Some essential proportion had been dis turbed He looked up at a slight sound and saw Mariana standing before him His expression he knew was severe he had been quite upset

I can see' she proceeded slowly that I have been very wicked I didn t realize Howat that it might affect you how real all that old stir might be I am tremendously sorry you must know that I am awfully fond of you It was pure young selfishness I was afraid that if I spoke first you wouldn t let him come And it was important —I must see him and talk to him and think about it You can realize mother and Kingsfre~e!

Where did you meet him? he demanded shortly

With Eliza at a meeting she went on more rapidly He s terribly brilliant and a steel man Isn t it funny? The Pennys were steel too or iron

and that's the same I wish you could be nice to him or just decent until — until I know

'Mariana!' he exclaimed, rising 'You don't mean that you are really — That you —

"Perhaps Howat she answered gravely 'I have only seen him twice and he has said nothing but you see I am an experienced young woman No *other man has made the same impression*

That he declared coldly, 'is unthinkable You can't know all the facts'

I do but somehow I don't care '

"Everything about him is impossible — his history family Why Eunice Scofield well Penny, married a man from behind a counter a fellow who sold womens gloves yes and more than half Jew And this man's mother was Delia Mullen a daughter of the dirty ward leader All this aside from — from his bad blood'

It's partly yours you know she said quietly After all there are other places I can see him" She turned away "Eliza Provost is insane' he muttered "No Mariana returned 'only superior to narrow little prejudices She can see life people as they are Jim Polder is one of the most promising men in the steel mills He is going up and up That is enough for Eliza, it is enough for me and if it won't do for my family — she made an opening gesture with her fingers Her expression had hardened she gazed at him with bright contemptuous eyes In a moment the affectionate bonds

between them seemed to have dissolved His feeling was one of mingled anger and concern but he endeavoured to regain his self control conscious that a hasty word more might do irreparable harm

Of course I can t have you meeting him about the streets he stated 'It is better here if necessary I am very much displeased a note of complaint appeared and she immediately returned to him laid a hand on his shoulder Nothing is certain' she assured him I wanted to be sure that is all I don t want to make a mess out of things

It was a part of the very quality of emotional courage he had so lately defined extolled a part of her disdain for ordinary prudence and conventional approbation A direct dislike for this James Polder invaded him a determined attitude of hyper criticism When the younger man reappeared Howat Penny found justification for this attitude The details of Polder s apparel although acceptable in the main were without nicety His shoes were a crude tan and his necktie from the outer limbo His hands too had a grimy surface and the nails were broken unkempt

But it was evident that all the criticism was not to be limited to his own James Polder regarded the single glass with a scoffing lip as if it were the appendage of a ludicrous Anglomania He glanced with indifference at Howat Penny s pictures books the collected emblems of his cultivated years His brows raised at the photograph of Scalchi in the

Page's trunks — as if, the elder thought, she had been a "pony" in the *Black Crook* — and was visibly amused at the great Mapleson, posed in a dignified attitude by a broken column. An irrepressible and biting scorn Howat Penny saw was, perhaps the young man's strongest attribute. He had violent opinions expressed in sudden sharp movements, gestures with his shoulders, swift frowns and fragmentary sentences.

Howat Penny had never seen a more ill ordered youth and he experienced an increasing difficulty in keeping a marked asperity from his speech and conduct. Eliza Provost shortly came down and the three strolled out into the ruddy light of late afternoon. Howat Penny consumed a long time dressing for the evening and in the end irritably summoned Rudolph. "I can't get these damned studs in," he complained; "whatever do you suppose women use for starch now?" Rudolph dexterously fixed the emeralds, then held the black silk waistcoat. "And coats won't hang for a bawbee," he went on. "Gentlemen like Gary Dilkes used to go regularly to London spring and fall for their things. No doubt then about a man of breeding. You didn't see the other kind around. Wouldn't have 'em." Rudolph murmured consolingly. "Sat in the pit but never got into the boxes," his voice grew thin, querulous.

"I'm moving along, Rudolph," he admitted suddenly; "the manners and by thunder the music too, don't suit me any more. Give me the old Acad

emy days in Irving Place He hummed a bar from *Ernani*

Through dinner he maintained a severe silence listening with a frowning disapproval to Eliza Provost s tranquil subversive utterances Howat Penny couldn t think what her father was about permitting her to harangue loafers by the streets and saloons She was in a cold way — she had Peter Jannan Provost s curious grey colouring — a handsome piece of a girl too A fine figger he told himself

Later Mariana and James Polder had gone out on the porch he faced with reluctance the task of furnishing her with entertainment but to his extreme relief she procured a leather portfolio and addressed herself to a sheaf of papers But that in itself was a peculiar way for a young woman to spend an evening She would have done it he felt if he had been half his actual age God help the man with a fancy for her! Charming visions were woven on his memory from the fading skeins of the past — a ride in a dilapidated public fiacre after a masked ball in Paris at dawn Confetti tangled in coppery hair a wilful mouth fragrantly painted and phantomlike swans on a black lake His silk hat had been telescoped in the process of smacking a Frenchman s eye Perhaps they had told each other there would be cards later in the day an affair of honour He forgot what exactly had happened but there had been no duel

He looked up with a sudden concern, as if his thoughts might have been clear to Eliza Provost in irreproachable evening dress and shell rimmed glasses, intent on statistical pages Mariana and James Polder appeared the former, Howat Penny thought disturbed Polder's intense countenance was sombre his brow corrugated Mariana, accompanied by Eliza, soon after went up and left the two men facing each other across a neutral silence "You manufacture steel, I believe the elder finally stated

The Company does" Polder replied more exactly ' I've been in the open hearth since I left school' he went on "it was born in me, I've never thought of anything else' His tone grew sharp, as if it might occur to the other to contradict the legitimacy of his pursuit ' I have done well enough, too he said pridefully Most of them come on from college I went from shovelling slag in the pit, the crane to second helper and melter they gave me the furnace after a year and now I am foreman It will be better still if a reorganization goes through Not many men have a chance at the superintendent's office under thirty five"

That is very admirable Howat Penny said formally He wondered privately at the far channel into which the original Penny ability had flowed There could be no doubt however objectionable that James Polder was the present repository of the family tradition He had had it from the source and

the iron had not apparently been corroded by tainted blood He was forced to admit that a coarser strain had perhaps, lent it endurance All this failed to detract from his initial dislike of young Polder There was a lack of breeding in the manner in which he sat in his chair thrust forward on its edge in his arrogant proclamation of ability suc cess James Polder was anxious he realized to im press him Howat Penny with the fact that he was not negligible Such things were utterly unimpor tant to him He was unable to justify or even ex plain to himself his standards of judgment They were not founded on admirable conduct on achieve-ment what was known as solid worth but on vague accents intuitive attitudes of mind visible in a hun dred trivial even absurd, signs The right things were more indispensable to him than the sublimest attributes

On the following morning Mariana Eliza and Polder disappeared in his car — it seemed that the latter was an accomplished mechanic in addition to his other qualities — and Howat Penny faced the disagreeable possibilities of the near future Mari ana would he knew meet this fellow promiscuously if necessary As she had indicated it was impossi ble to conceive of him in Charlotte Jannan s house The latter was a rigidly correct woman She would too and properly be nasty if she learned that such meetings had taken place at Shadrach The only thing to do was to bring Mariana to what he desig-

nated as her senses And at the start he had a conviction that he might fail

She did not accompany Eliza Provost and Polder, when late Sunday afternoon they departed but sat absorbed in thought through the evening meal He found his affection for her increasing to an annoying degree he was almost humble in his anxiety not to wound her

Life is so messy" she said with sudden violence You can t think Howat how I hate myself the horridest things go round and round through my mind We re all wrong — I m more like you than I admitted — born snobs I mean the kind who look down on people different from themselves I can t help being on — on edge I can tell you this though I care more for Jim Polder than for any other man I ve ever met I m mad about him and yet somehow I can't quite think of marrying him He s asked me already But I knew he would '

You must wait" he temporized 'such things clear up after a little '

' And if they don t?" she they are choked by a hundred thoughts? It can be too ! Howat You must know cide what really is the hold tight on to or let seems — one what I I want Jim and I m about I unice or Essie

doesn t matter a bawbee, as you say I hate it because I think at times it makes him unhappy Really I believe I am fonder of him because of it We owe him something — the superior Jannans and Pennys Why Howat he s your own blood and you looked at him as if he were a grocer's assistant And I watched hatefully for the little expressions that seemed common Of course out in those mills he would pick up a lot that wouldn t touch us and after all he could drop them

If you have any thought of reforming him he commented dryly 'you might as well see a wedding stationer'

I could influence him' she insisted I d at least count for as much as those shovellers and furnace men'

But not he proceeded relentlessly against the Essie Scofield you dismissed so easily I don t doubt for a minute the unhappiness you spoke of it would be a part of his inheritance and you d never charm it out of him Damn it Mariana he burst out he s inferior! That s all inferior Anger and resentment destroyed his caution his planned logic restraint I can see what your life would be if you can t You would live in a no man s land and all the clergymen in the world couldn t make you one

It wouldn t be the clergymen Howat she said simply And you mustn t think I am only a silly with her first young man I have kissed them before

Howat ves and liked it I am not happy with Jim it s something else, like tearing silk He is so confident and so helpless he s drinking now too'

I suppose that is an added attraction ' he commented She chose to ignore this I half promised him' she continued "to take dinner with his family He will be in the city next week I said I thought you d bring me '

Well I won t,' he replied in a startled energy 'Mariana you re out of your head Go to Byron Polder s house! Me!" In his excitement he dropped a lighted cigarette on the Chinese rug

I have no one else ' she told him 'Perhaps I ll marry Jim and go away I thought you might want to be with me at the last

He fumbled for his glass fixed it in his eye and then dropped it out clearing his throat sharply He rose and crossed the room and looked out through the open door at the night The stars were hazy and there was a constant reflection of lightning on the horizon Howat Penny swore silently at his increasing softness his betrayal by his years Yet it might be a good thing for her to see the Polder family assembled Byron — he was a pretentious looking fool — at one end of the table and Delia Mullen Polder at the other There were more children too But if it became necessary heaven knew how he would explain all this to Charlotte I believe' he said apparently innocently, "that they live in the north end of the city

It won t damage you she replied indirectly Already he thought with poignant regret a part of the old Mariana had gone her voice was older darker with maturity

XXVI

HOWAT PENNY arrived in town late on the day when he was to dine with Mariana at the Polders He entered a taxicab and was carried smoothly through the thick hot air open electric cars laden with damp, pallid sales people passed with a harsh ringing and the foliage in Rittenhouse Square hung dusty and limp and still The houses beyond on Nineteenth Street where the Jannans winter dwelling stood were closed and blankly boarded The small provisional entrance before which he stopped opened and a servant out of livery appeared 'Shall I tell the driver to return sir? he queried 'the telephone is disconnected He issued instructions and with Howat Penny s bag followed him into the darkened house

The windows of a general chamber on the second floor had been thrown open and there he found Mariana s brother Kingsfrere Jannan was a young man with a broad white face shadowed in pasty green and leaden eyes His countenance Howat knew masked a keen and avaricious temperament He did uncommonly well at auction bridge in the clubs Kingsfrere in a grey morning coat with

white linen gaiters and a relentless collar nodded and lounged from the room and Mariana soon appeared Perhaps Howat she said it would be better if you didn t dress I have an idea the Pol der men don t

At the stubborn expression which possessed him she exclaimed sharply ' If you tell me that the Colo nel or Gary Dilkes were always formally dressed at dinner I think I ll scream Nevertheless he had no intention of relinquishing a habit of years for the Polders or the north end of the city and when later he came down into the hall where the man stood with his silk hat and cape Mariana put an arm about his shoulders I wish every one could be as beautiful as yourself she told him They passed the Square bathed in dusk and the beginning shim mer of arc lights went through the flattened and faintly thunderous arch of a railway and turned into a broad asphalt street on which wide glisten ing bulk windows gave place to sombre shops with lurid flame-streaked vistas and continuous resi dences beyond Howat Penny gazed curiously at the tall narrow dwellings often a continuous simi lar façade from street corner to corner then diversi fied in elaborate individual design All however had deep stone steps leading to the sidewalk thronged with figures in airy white dresses coatless men smoking contentedly there was a constant light vibration of laughing voices and subdued call ing and the fainter strains of mechanical music the

beat of popular marches and attenuated voices of celebrated singers

The motor turned suddenly in to the curb and they got out The house before them, like its fellows was entered from a high flight of red sandstone steps and was built of a smooth, soapy green stone with red coursings an elaborate cornice and tiled Italian roof No one was sitting outside although there was a pile of circular, grass woven cushions and Howat sharply rang the bell A maid in aproned black admitted them into a narrow hall from which stairs mounted with a carved rail terminating in a newel post supporting an almost life-sized bronze nymph whose flowing hair was encircled by a wreath of electrically lit flowers and who held a dully shining sheaf of jonquils There was no other illumination and Howat Penny discovered in the obscurity a high mirror bristling with elk horns, on which hung various hats and outer garments He stood helpless apparently in an attitude he found impossible to deny himself waiting to be relieved of his coverings when Mariana whispered angrily

Don t be so rotten Howat '

Finally the maid secured his cape, and he was conscious of a stir at the head of the stairs Immediately after a shrill subdued voice carried to where he stood. I told you ' it said violently " dress suit ' There was an answering murmur in which he could distinguish James Polder s impatient tones The latter descended and flooded

the hall with light from a globe in the ceiling He was garbed in blue serge and flannels Isa bella he stated directly belligerently even thinks we ought to change our clothes but we never do and I wouldn t hear of — of lying for effect Howat Penny s dislike for him pleasantly increased. Mariana in rose crepe with a soft dull gold girdle and long trumpet like sleeves of flowered gauze smiled at him warmly It is a harmless pose of Howat s she explained a concession to thé ghosts of the past ' She patted the elder on the shoulder

Above James Polder ushered them into a room hung with crimson and gilt stamped paper an elaborately fretted cherry mantel about the asbestos rectangle of an artificial hearth and a multitude of chairs and divans shrouded in linen There was an upright ebonized piano draped in a fringed Roman scarf and holding a towering jar of roses a great carved easel with a painstaking smooth oil painting of a dark man in an attitude of fixed dignity and an expensively cased talking machine The original evidently of the portrait and a small rotund woman in mauve brocade advanced to meet them Young Polder said My mother and father This is Miss Jannan and Mr Howat Penny

The latter saw that Mrs Byron Polder was dis tinctly nervous she twisted the diamonds that occu pied a not inconsiderable portion of her short fin gers and smiled rigidly ' I am very pleased to

meet you, Miss Jannan, she proceeded 'and Mr Penny too' She held out a hand, then half with drew it but Mariana captured it in her direct palm 'Thank you she replied Byron Polder had a more confident poise in reality there was a per ceptible chill in his manner He was a handsome man with a cleanly shaven face introspective brown eyes and a petulant drooping mouth You have succeeded in finding your way to my house" he pronounced enigmatically, gazing at Howat Penny

It was Howat thought just such an ill bred ut terance as he had looked for from Byron Polder and he made no effort to mitigate it He was con scious of and resolutely ignored Mariana s veiled entreaty 'You don t know my girls" Mrs Polder continued rapidly Here is Isabella and Kate will be along for dinner' A tall bony woman of perhaps thirty five in an appalling complication of ribbons and silk moved forward with a conventional sentence In her Howat s appraisements went on virginity had been perpetuated in a captious obsession They stood awkwardly silent until James Polder exclaimed Good heavens this isn t a wax works! Why don t we sit down? The older woman glanced with a consuming anxiety at Isabella and nodded violently toward an exit It s a quar ter after seven she said in a swift aside Isabella correctly disposed on a chair of muffled and mysteri ous line resolutely ignored the appeal

'I didn t suppose you d be in the city' she ad

dressed Mariana ' I read in the paper that you had gone to Watch Hill with Mrs Ledyard B Starr

You can see that I m back Mariana smiled The family, of course are at Andalusia but we have all been in town the past days I am really staying with Howat at Shadrach'

' The former location of Shadrach Furnace I be lieve' Byron Polder stated Now in ruins Howat Penny accurately gathered that the other inferred the collapse not only of the Furnace He secured the single glass in his eye and looked deliberately around Isabella watched him with a tense interest. Mrs Polder gave a short perturbed giggle Just like George Arliss she told her son James Polder on the edge of a chair was twitching with repressed uneasiness he frowned antagonistically and then gazed appealingly at Mariana I have been introduced to your cousin Miss Provost Isabella again took up her social thread A dear friend of mine a talented actress gave a recitation at Miss Provost s request for suffrage

Eliza s splendid Mariana pronounced

Peter Jannan Provost s daughter Byron Polder added fully But his voice indicated that even more darkly unfavourable might be revealed 'Miss Provost has been under arrest Damn the solemn ass Howat Penny thought She s been in the jug twice now Mariana went on cheerfully Kingsfrere had to put up a bond the last time Mrs Polder was rapidly regaining her ease Wasn t

her mamma scared?" she inquired "I d go on if Isabella was taken up"

"Imagine Isabella!" Jim Polder exploded "It s quite the thing ' that individual asserted "Isa bella, her mother declared ' it is twenty five past seven I wish you d go out and see where dinner is' She rose with an expression of mingled surprise and pain 'Really mother she said "that is an ex traordinary request ' Her brother snorted There was a sudden muffled clamour of chimes from below, and Mrs Polder gave a sigh of relief 'I didn t want it spoiled ' she explained descending Jim would be wild after all his eagerness to have things nice '

The dining room resembling all the interior was long and narrow and had a high ceiling in varnished light wood Byron Polder faced his wife at the op posite end of the table Howat Penny sat beside Mariana with Jim Polder across Isabella was on her mother s right and a waiting place was filled by a dark surprisingly beautiful girl This is Kate Mrs Polder said proudly Howat thought he had not seen such a handsome female for years She wore a ruffled transparent crepe de Chine waist that clung in frank curves to full graceful shoulders her hair was a lustrous black coil and she had sultry topaz eyes and a mouth drooping like her father s but more warmly bowed Kate Polder met the direct pleasure of his inspection with a privately conveyed admission that she understood and subscribed to it

Here at last was a girl up to the standard of old days the divinity of Scalchi herself She would have created a sensation in Delmonico s the real Delmonico s Gary and the Colonel —

' We think they re elegant Mrs Polder s voice broke in on his revery He looked up and saw a great fish on a huge platter before his host a fish in surprising semblance to life had it not been for the rosettes of lemon the green bed which surround d it Gracious no she answered Mariana s query we don t do it home Mr Polder has them sent from a Rathskeller down town He ll make a meal off one The latter was plainly chagrined at this light thrown on his petty appetites He assumed an air of complete detachment in the portioning of the dish but at the same time managed to supply himself liberally The conversation was sporadic Howat Penny found the dinner lavish and divided his attention between it and Kate Polder James and Mariana addressed general remarks to the table at succeeding intervals Mr Polder gloomed and Isabella went through the gestures the accents of the occasion with utter correctness Howat studied Mariana but he was unable to discover her thoughts she was smiling and cordial and apologized for losing her slipper I always do she explained James Polder hastily rose and came around to assist her The dinner was at an end and she stood with a slim silken foot outheld for him to replace the fragile object of search

They reassembled above and Mrs Polder suggested music. My son says you are very fond of good music she addressed Howat Penny I can tell you it is a lovely taste We have the prettiest records that come Isabella put on *Harl Hark the Lark* She obediently rose and revolving the handle of the talking machine fixed the grooved rubber disk and needle Howat listened with a stony countenance to the ensuing strains Such instruments were his particular detestation Mrs Polder waved her hand dreamily Now ' she said " the *Sextette* and *The End of a Perfect Day* No Mr Penny would like to hear *Salome* I'm sure with all those cymbals and creepy Eastern tunes An orgy of sound followed applauded — perversely he was certain — by Mariana James he saw was as uneasy as himself but for a totally different reason He gazed at Mariana with a fierce devotion patent to the most casual eye his expression was tormented with concern and longing

When do you return to Harrisburg?' Byron Polder inquired 'My son" he went on to Howat Penny is a practical iron man I say iron although that is no longer the phrase because of natural associations The present system of the manufacture of steel as you doubtless know evolved from the old Ironmasters of whose blood James has a generous share We look to him to re-establish er — a departed importance I need say no more His women s anxiety at this trend of speech became pain

ful. 'Play a right lively piece' Mrs Polder interjected and an intolerable cacophony of banjoes followed making conversation futile

The evening Howat Penny felt was a considerable success by heaven Mariana would never get herself into this! Byron Polder s innuendoes must have annoyed her nicely When the mechanical disturbance ceased Mrs Polder said I believe that's the bell Evidently she had been correct for, immediately after a young woman with bright gold hair and a mobile pink countenance unceremoniously entered the room Oh! she exclaimed in an instinctively statuesque surprise I didn t know you were entertaining company

Come right in Harriet' Mrs Polder heartily proclaimed Miss Jannan Mr Penny this is Isabella s friend Harriet de Barry a near neighbour and a sweet girl She s an actress too understudies Vivian Blane and is better, lots say than the lead

Harriet de Barry made a comprehensive ge ture "I wanted to say good bye to you all she announced I am going on tour Leave at midnight Just had a wire from Mrs Blane There were polite Polder exclamations regret congratulations through which the son of the house moodily gazed at the carpet Haven t you anything to say to Hatty?' his mother demanded 'And after all the passes she sent you" Howat Penny saw Mariana s gaze rest swiftly on the latest comer s obvious good

looks and the scrutiny, he was certain, held a cold feminine appraisal As they descended to leave Mariana lingered on the stairs with Jim The latter closed the door of the public motor with a low, intense mutter and moving away Howat Penny lit a cigarette with a breath of audible relief

I don t know which I detest most,' Mariana declared viciously 'you or myself'

You might include that fish,' he added plaintively She gazed at him in cold contempt, with an ugly protruding lip Nothing else was said until they were in the opened room at the Jannans Mariana flung herself on a broad divan with her narrowed gaze fixed on the points of her slippers

Comfortable isn t it' she addressed him 'this feeling of superiority? He placidly nodded inwardly highly pleased 'I wish I'd married Jim the first week I knew him without trying to be so dam admirable Howat what is it that makes people what they are and aren t? It was he told her difficult to express but it had to do with inherited associations Mrs Polder is as kind as possible she asserted 'and I could see that you were absorbed in Kate'

Really Mariana' he protested "at times you are a little rough She is a very fine girl in fact, reminds me of Sealchi Old Byron though what — a regular catafalque'" A blundering step mounted to the stair Kingsfrere entered and stood wavering and concerned the collar wilted and a gaiter miss

ing Ought to do something about the front door he asserted 'frightful condition no paint and full of splinters Very plump splinters he specified examining a hand Mariana surveyed him coolly thoroughly Sweet isn t he? she re marked. Kingsfrere Gilbert Todd Jannan

That s absolutely all that individual assured her Except if you want to add Sturgeon some do Hullow Howat! Grand old boy Howat he told her But if he says I m drunk I will tell you one of Bundy s stories about him This — this ele gant deception tremendous noise with the song birds He sat abruptly on a providentially con venient chair There limply he hiccoughed 'Sweet Mariana repeated Kingsfrere finally rose and with a friendly wave wandered from the oom

It was good of you to take me Howat she told him wearily Although now I can see that you went willingly enough You thought it would cure me But of what Howat — of love? Of a feeling that perhaps I d found a reason for living?

A decidedly uncomfortable feeling doubt invaded him He had an unjustified sense of meddling of blundering into a paramount situation to which he lacked the key He had done nothing debatable he assured himself Mariana s inherent well — preju dices couldn t be charged to him In the room where he was to sleep the uneasiness followed him She was his greatest his only concern Howat Penny

reviewed his desire for her, his preference for a Mariana untouched by the common surge of living He recalled the discontent, the feeling of sterility that had lately possessed him the suspicion that his life had been in vain All his philosophy, his accumulated convictions were involved and tie in hand he sat endeavouring to pierce the confusion of his ideas

He was conscious of a slow change gathering within him and in itself that consciousness was disturbing It had a vaguely dark chill aspect He shivered in the room super heated by summer his blood ran thinner and cold Howat Penny had a sudden, startling sense of his utter loneliness there was absolutely no one, now, to whom he could turn for the understanding born of long and intimately affectionate association Mariana was lost to him in her own poignant affair No children So many so much dead His countenance however grew firm with the determination that age should not find him a coward He had always been bitterly contemptuous of the men that, surfeiting their appetites showed at the impotent last a cheap repentance But he had done nothing pointedly wrong he had — the inversion repeated itself — done nothing

XXVII

AT Shadrach his customary decision returned he went about, or sat reading well-ordered cool appearing dogmatic He learned from the *Evening Post* that Mariana was at Warren ton She had carefully described to him the Vir ginia country life the gaiety and hard riding of the transplanted English colonies and he pic tured her at the successive horse shows in the bril liant groups under the Doric columns of the por ticoes Then he saw she had gone north he found her picture in a realistic Egyptian costume with bare painted legs at an extravagant ball He studied her countenance magnifying it with a read ing glass but he saw nothing beyond a surface en joyment of the moment

Then to his utter surprise on an evening after dinner, when he was seated in the settling dusk of the porch intent on the grey movements of his fa miliar owls a quick step mounted the path and James Polder appeared

I wanted to ask about Miss Jannan the lat ter stated frankly and at once Howat Penny cleared his throat sharply I believe she is well he stated formally You will find it cooler here It struck him that the young man was not deficient

in that particular More of still greater directness followed I suppose you know,' Polder stated "that I want to marry her and she won t"

I had gathered something of the sort" the other admitted 'It s natural in a way Polder proceeded gloomily "I d take her away from so much And, yet look here — you can shut me up if you like — what's it all about? Can you tell me that? Howat Penny couldn t. 'I m not to blame for that old mess any more than you And it s not my fault if something of — of which you think so much came to me by the back door I ve always wanted what Mariana is' he burst out "and I have never been satisfied with what I could get And when I saw her hell — what s the use!

Any one in Harrisburg will tell you I am a good man" he reiterated at a slightly different angle When you kick through out of that racket of hunkies and steel you ve done something Soon I ll be getting five or six thousand' He paused and the other said dryly 'Admirable' The phrase seemed to him inadequate it sounded in his ear as unpleasantly as a false note Yet he was powerless to alter it change its brusque accent The personal tone of Polder's revelations was inherently distasteful to him He said rising "If you will excuse me I ll tell Rudolph you will be here"

But I won t Polder replied there s a train back at eleven I have to be at the mills for the

day shift to morrow I came out because I had to talk a little about Mariana He had deserted the more formal address And I wanted to tell some one connected with her that I have gimp of my own I know why she won t marry me and it s a small reason it would be small in —

Hold up Howat Penny interrupted incensed Am I to understand that you came here to complain about Miss Jannan s conduct? That won t do you know

It s a small reason the other insisted hotly ' Hardly more than the idiotic fact that I m not in the Social Register I am ashamed of her and I said so It was so little that I told her I wouldn t argue She could go to the devil

Really the other observed really I shall have to ask you to control your language or leave

I wonder if she will? the surprising James Polder sombrely speculated I wonder if I am? But there are other women with better hearts

Are we to construe this as a threat?' Howat asked in a delicately balanced tone

For God s sake he begged can t you be human! The other suddenly recalled Mariana s imploring ang r at the Polders Don t be so rotten Howat The confusion of his valuations his habitual attitudes of thought returned His gaze strayed to the obscured ruin of Shadrach Furnace at once a monument of departed vigour and present disintegration Perhaps just as the energy had

expired in the Furnace it had seeped from him It might be that he was only a sere husk, a dry bundle of inhibitions insensible to the green humanity of life

'I couldn t go on my knees to anything' the younger took up his burden "Wrong or not it is the way I'm made I d not hang about where I wasn t wanted Although you mightn't think it. And I am sorry I came here I do things like that all the time I mean I do say exactly the opposite of what I plan You ll think I am a braying ass of course

'Stop for a breath" Howat Penny recommended a breath and a cigarette' He extended his case and in place of taking a cigarette, Polder examined the case resentfully There is it,' he declared 'correct, like all the rest of you And it s only old leather But mine would be different I could sink and Mariana wouldn't put out a hand just on account of that It s wrong' he insisted Expressed in that manner it did seem to Howat Penny a small reason for the withholding of any paramount salvation Yet he told himself he had no intention desire to undertake the weight of any reformation A futile effort he added with his vague consciousness of implacable destiny his dim sense of man moved from without in locked progression Polder was young rebellious but he could grow older he would grow older and comprehend or else beat himself to death on obdurate cir

cumstance What concerned Howat was the hope that Mariana would be no further involved in either process She too had this to learn — that in the end blood was stronger than will the dead were terribly potent He had even no inclination to say any of this to the man frowning in the dusk at his side It would be useless a mere preaching An expression too of a slight but actual sympathy for James Polder would be misleading In the main Howat was entirely careless of what might happen to the other it was only where unfortunately he touched Mariana that he entered into the elder s world He would sacrifice him for Mariana in an instant Polder rose

I must leave he announced Howat Penny expressed no regret and the other hesitated awk wardly It s no use! he finally exclaimed I can t reach you as if one of us spoke Patagonian Hellish it seems to me He turned and disap peared as violently as he had come over the ob scurity of the lawn A reddish misshapen moon hung low in the sky and gave the aging man an extraordinarily vivid impression of dead planets unthinkable wastes of time illimitable systems and spaces James Polder s passionate resentment his own emotion were no more articulate than the thin whirring of the locusts He went quickly into the house to the warm glow of his lamp the memories of his pictures the figurine in baked clay with Hermes wand of victory

XXVIII

THE heat dragged through the remainder of August and filled September with steaming days and heavy nights followed by driving grey storms and premonitory chill dawns A period of sunny tranquillity succeeded, but crimson blots of sumach the warmer tone of maples made it evident that summer had lapsed Honduras mulched the strawberries and set new teeth in his lawn rakes The days passed without feature or word from Mariana and Howat Penny fell into an almost slumberous monotony of existence It was not unpleasant occupied with small duties intent on his papers or wandering in a past that seemed to grow clearer rather than fade as time multiplied he maintained his erect carefully ordered existence Then among his mail he found a large formal appearing envelope which he opened with a mild curiosity His attitude of detachment was soon dispelled

Mrs Corinne de Barry desired the pleasure of his attendance at the wedding of her daughter Harriet to James Polder Details a church and hour were appended The headlong young man he thought with a smile Mariana was well out of that He

had been wise in saying nothing to Charlotte the thing had expired naturally But irrationally he thought of Polder with a trace of contempt — a man who had unquestionably possessed Mariana Jannan s regard marrying the pink faced under study to a second rate emotional actress! In a way it made him cross the fellow should have shown a — a greater appreciation delicacy Common place he said decisively aloud The following day Mariana herself appeared with a touch of sable and a small wickedly becoming hat

He was at lunch and without delay she took the place smilingly laid for her by Rudolph It was characteristic that she made no pretence of con cealing the r ason that had brought her to Shad rach Jim s going to marry that Harriet de Barry she said at once nicely casual I had a card he informed her It s to be on the thir tieth Mariana proceeded at eight o clock and in church Of course you are going

Not at all of course he replied energetically And you ll stay away for the plainest decency

We will go together she proceeded calmly I want to see Jim married happy She gazed at him with narrowed eyes

Mariana he told her that s a shameful lie It is cold feminine curiosity It s worse — the only vulgar thing I can remember your considering I won t hear of it He debated the wisdom of recounting James Polder s last visit to Shadrach

and decided in the negative 'Let the young man depart with his Harriet in peace"

It s sickening isn t it?' she queried "And yet it is so like Jim He had a very objectional idea of his dignity he was sensitive in a way that made me impatient He couldn t forget himself, you see That helped to make it difficult for me I wasn t used to it his feelings were always being damaged

Howat Penny nodded "You ll recall I emphasized that Mariana looked worn by her gaiety, he decided white for the first time in his memory she seemed older than her actual years Her friends he knew her existence bore the general appellation fast Howat had no share in the condemnatory aspect of the term but he realized that it had a literal application Their pace was feverish and Mariana plainly showed its effects Her voice already noted as more mature had he was sure hardened She dabbled her lips thickly with a rouge stick Mariana he said querulously "I wish you d stop this puppet dance you re leading I wish you would marry'

I tried to she coolly replied "but you spoiled my young dream of happiness'

"That isn t true he asserted sharply perturbed Anything that happened or didn t happen was only the result of yourself of what you are I am extremely anxious to have you settled and your legs out of the Sunday papers I — I am

opposed to your present existence it's gone on too long I believe I d rather see you orating on the streets, like Eliza Provost And by thunder I never thought I should come to that! Champagne and those damnable syncopated tunes played by hys terical niggers make a poor jig He spoke im petuously unconscious of any reversal of previous judgments opinions

"You are so difficult to please Howat she said wearily "you were aghast at the thought of my marrying James and now you are complaining of the natural alternative The truth is she added brutally 'you are old fashioned you think life goes on just as it did when the Academy of Music was the centre of your world And nothing is the same She rose and with a lighted cigarette and half shut eyes fell into a rhythmic step of sensuous abandon You see she remarked pausing An increasing dread for her filled his heart He felt in response to her challenge a sudden bewilderment in the world of to-day Things Howat Penny told himself were marching to the devil He said this irritably loud and she laughed I m going in by an early train she proceeded We have left the country Will you stop for me on the thirtieth? Early Howat so we can be sure of a good place

His helplessness included the subject of her re marks he would be realized be at James Polder s wedding but he persisted in his opinion A low piece of business' Howat declared When she had

gone he felt that he had not penetrated her actual attitude toward Polder's deflection He had not for a moment got beneath her casual manner her lightness pretended or actual He wished vehemently that he were back again in the past he comprehended among the familiar figures that had thronged the notable dinner to Patti the women who had floated so graciously through the poetry of departed waltzes *He got out his albums once more scrutinized* through his polished glass the programmes of evenings famous in song But he went to bed a full two hours earlier than customary his feet positively dragged up the stairs above he sat strangely exhausted breathing heavily for, apparently no reason whatever

He retraced with Mariana, the course over the broad asphalt way into the north end of the city early on the evening of the thirtieth They found the church easily by reason of a striped canvas tunnel stretched out to the curb and a young man with plastered hair and a gardenia led them, Mariana on his arm to a place on the centre aisle The church had a high nave newly vaulted in maple and stained glass windows draped with smilax garish in colour against electric lights Above the altar a great illuminated cross maintained an unsteady flickering and — it was unseasonably cold — heating steam pipes gave out an expanding racket

The pews through the centre filled rapidly there was a low excited chatter of voices and a spreading

tropical expanse of the dyed feathers and iridescent foliage of womens hats An overpowering scent of mingled perfumes rose and filled the interior The strains of an organ grew audible contesting with the rattle of the steam pipes Howat Penny was detached critical Mariana in a dull black satin wrap of innumerable soft folds and wide paisley collar slipping from a sheath like bodice of gleaming cut steel beading was silent incurious He turned to her to point out an extravagant figure but he said nothing She was evidently in no mood for the enjoyment of the ridiculous This disturbed him he had not thought that she would be so — so concerned He suppressed an impatient exclamation and returned to the scrutiny of the culminating ceremony

Here was a sphere vastly larger than his own to the habits and prejudices of which he was complete stranger It was as James Polder had said — as if one or the other spoke Patagonian He had no wish to acquire the language about him a positive antagonism to his surrounding possessed him beyond reason He thought — how different Mariana is from all this and was annoyed again at her serious bearing Then he was surprised by his presence there at all confound the girl why didn t she play with her own kind! Yet only the other day the glimpse she had given him of her natural associates had filled him with dread His mind striving to encompass the problem of Mariana s existence

failed to overcome the walls built about him by time, by habit He gave it up The louder pealing of the organ announced immediate developments

There was a stir in the front of the church, a clergyman in white vestment advanced and at a sudden murmurous interest a twisting of heads, the wedding procession moved slowly up the aisle The ushers painstakingly adopting various lengths of stride to the requirements of the organ, passed in pairs then followed an equal number of young women among whom he instantly recognized the handsome presence of Kate Polder, in drooping blue bonnets with prodigious panniers of celestial hued silk carrying white enamelled shepherd s crooks from which depended loops of artificial buttercups An open space ensued in the centre of which advanced a child with starched white skirts springing out in a lacy wheel about spare bare knees her pale yellow hair tied in an overwhelming blue bow and holding outstretched in a species of intense and quivering agony a white velvet cushion to which were pinned two gold wedding bands

After that Howat Penny thought the prospective bride could furnish only the diminished spectacle of an anti climax Led by the virginal presence of Isabella Polder she floated forward in a foam of white tulle and dragging satin attached below her bare full shoulders A floating veil pinned with a wreath of orange blossoms manifestly wax covered the metallic gold of her hair Her countenance was unper

turbed statuesque, and pink As the sentimental clamour of the organ died the steam pipes took up with renewed vigour their utilitarian noise Why don t they turn them off? Mariana exclaimed in his ear Personally he enjoyed such an accompaniment to what he designated as the performance

He cast the participants in their inevitable roles —the bride as prima donna James Polder the heroic tenor Mrs Corinne de Barry a thin, con cerned figure in gli tening lavender supported a la menting mezzo, the bulky masculine figure at her side with an imposing diamond on a hand like two bricks was beautifully basso—

His train of thought was abruptly upset by James Polder s familiar staccato utterance The precipi tant young man! It stamped out all Howat Pen ny s humorous condescension his sensitive ear was conscious of a note almost of desperation He avoided looking at Mariana Damn it the thing unexpectedly cut at him like a knife James Polder said, I will The clear studied tones of Harriet de Barry understudy to Vivian Blane were spoiled by the crackling of steam Howat moved un asily he had an absurd sense of guilt he hated the whole proceeding What was that Polder whose voice persisted so darkly in his hearing about getting himself into such a snarl? He recalled what the younger had said on his porch—' women with bet ter hearts He had implored him, Howat Penny to be more human The memory too of the

shaken tone of that request bothered him Now it appeared that he might have been well, more human He composed himself, facing such sentimental illusions into a savage indifference to what remained of the ceremony he ignored the passage of Polder with Harriet Polder on his arm the relief of the unspeakable child carrying the white velvet cushion no longer in the manner of a hot plate the united bridesmaids and ushers "Thank heaven that's over!" he ejaculated in the deeply comfortable space of the Jannan's motor laundalet "But it isn't" Mariana said briefly She sat silent with her head turned from him through the remainder of the short drive about Rittenhouse Square Then she went abruptly to her room

Charlotte Jannan and her oldest child Sophie Lewis, were above in the living room The former was handsome in a rigid way her countenance squarely and harshly formed with grey hair exactly waved and pinned had an expression of cold firmness her voice was assertive and final Sophie apparently midway in appearance between Kingsfrere and Mariana was gracefully proportioned and gave an impression of illusive beauty by means of a mystery of veils such as were caught up on her hat now They were discussing he discovered the family

It's an outrage Howat Charlotte told him "you never married and that the name will go Here's Mariana at twenty seven almost and nothing in sight and Sophie flatly refuses after only

'one to have another child I wish now I d had a dozen It is really the duty of the proper people And Eliza Provost won t hear of a man' I tell Sophie it s their own fault when they complain about society to day It s the fault of this charity work and athletics too both extremely levelling Hun dreds of women wind bandages or go to the hunt races and gabble about votes for no reason under heaven but superior associates

Howat will feelingly curse the present with you Sophie said rising I must go Borrow the mo tor if you don t mind I saw in the paper a Polder was married Howat Penny lit a cigarette ad mirably stolid A name I never repeat Char lotte Jannan said when her daughter had left He heard again the echo of James Polder s intense voice I will Something of his dislike for him he discovered had evaporated Howat thought of Mariana in her room — alone with what feelings? He realized that Charlotte would never have forgiven her for any excursion in that direction He him elf had been was entirely opposed to such a connec tion However he could now dismiss it into the past that he'd a multitude of similarly futile imagin ings

Charlotte he inferred had no elasticity it was a quality the absence of which he had not before noted She was a little narrow in her complacency Her patent satisfaction in Sophie was a shade too — too worldly Sam Lewis was of course irreproachably

situated but he was at the same time thick witted an indolent appendage for his name Suddenly he felt poignantly sorry for Mariana in a way she seemed to have been trapped by life James Polder resembled her in that he had been caught in an ugly net of circumstance A great deal had been upset since his day when the boxes and pit had been so conveniently separated old boundaries no longer defined limited their content social demarcations were being obliterated by a growing disaffection It was very unfortunate, for as he was seeing unhappiness ensued It was bound to An irritability seized him at being dragged into such useless conjecturing into at his age, confusing complications and he greeted with relief the long low front of his dwelling at Shadrach its old grey stone a seeming outcropping of the old green turf, the aged surrounding trees

XXIX

MARIANA however followed him almost immediately She stood before him in an informal belted black wool sweater a ridiculously inadequate skirt and the solid shoes he detested on women But he soon forgot her garb

Howat she told him I have made a cowardly and terrible mistake I was meant to marry Jimmy and I didn t Perhaps I have ruined his life Mine will be nothing without him They were in the middle room and a fire of hickory was burning in the panelled hearth She dropped on a chair and sat gazing into the singing flames Here it s all to do over he thought with a feeling of weariness He may get along very well with his Harriet? he remarked resentful of his dissipated contentment

You know he won t she replied sharply He loves me and I love him Howat I never knew how much or how little anything else mattered until I was in my room after his wedding It wasn t a wedding really she declared All that doesn t make one He ll find it out too Jimmy will be desperate and I'm afraid he will drink harder He told me they were getting frightfully strict about

that at the Works And there's that reorganization it will embitter him if he isn't made superintendent He has worked splendidly for it That woman he — he went off with is a squash' she said vindictively 'She will be in bed when he goes away in the morning and in crepe de Chine negligee when he gets back Perhaps it won't last' she added thoughtfully

The sense of future security generated in Howat Penny by the marriage abruptly departed He fumbled with his glass directed it at Mariana 'What do you mean by that? he demanded I would go to him like a shot, if he needed me' she coolly returned The dreadful part of it was that he was sure she would Nonsense he asserted hiding his concern 'there will be no fence climbing' All this came from the letting down of conversational bars the confounded books he found about on tables Words like everything else had lost their meanings In his day a bad woman was bad, a good likewise good but the Lord couldn't tell them apart now It was the dancing too Might as well be married to a man he thought

Mariana was haggard the paint on her face crudely — paint He saw that there were tears in her eyes and he turned away confused rose The slot in his cigarette box refused to open and he shook it violently then put it back with a clatter Tell Rudolph you're here he said disjointedly and miserable left the room Dressing he stood

at a window the west held a narrow strip of crim son light under a windy mass of cloud The ruin of Shadrach Furnace was sombre Within the room was almost bare There was a large high posted bed without drapings a vermilion lacquered table dark with age supporting a glass lamp at its side a set of drawers with old brass handles a pair of stiff Adam chairs with wheel backs and a modern mahogany dressing case variously and conveniently divided a clear mirror in the door

The day failed rapidly and he lit a pair of small lamps on the set of drawers The sun sank in no time at all Mariana crying The girl ought to go to her mother and not come out to him an old man with her intimate troubles A name I never repeat Charlotte had said That was just like her Small sympathy there and no more under standing He knotted his tie hurriedly askew and gathered the ends once more It tired him a little to dress in the evening often he longed to stay re laxed pondering until Rudolph called him to din ner But every day something automatic tyran nical dragged him up to his room encased him in rigid linen formal black Mariana against the fireplace ate listlessly and later he beat her with shameful ease at sniff

You can t do that he pointed out with asper ity when she thoughtlessly joined unequal numbers

Why not? she asked She must be addled

It s against the rule Mariana said I m tired

of rules ' She always had put away the dominoe but to-night she ignored them, and he returned th pieces to their morocco case She relapsed into s lence and a chair and he sat with gaze fixed on th hickory in the fireplace, burning to impalpable whi ash

What a procession of logs had been there reduce to dust warming generations of men now cold Th thought of all those lapsed winters and lives soothe him the clamour of living seemed to retreat to leav him in a grey tranquillity His head sank forward and his narrow dark hands rested in absolute immo bility on the arms of his chair He roused suddenl to discover that Mariana had gone up and tha there were only some fitful rosy embers of fire left In November it had been his custom to go into tow for the winter and it was time for him to make suc arrangement but all at once he was overwhelm ingly reluctant to face the change, the stir, of mov ing The city seemed intolerably noisy oppressive the thought of the hurrying indifferent crowds dis concerted him At Shadrach it was quiet familiar spacious He had had enough of excursions strange faces problems He would speak to Rudolph Stay

XXX

THE countryside it appeared to Howat Penny flamed with autumn and faded in a day Throughout the night he heard the crisp sliding of dead leaves over the roof the lash of the wind swung impotently about the rectangular stone block of his dwelling At the closing of shutters the December gales only penetrated to him in a thin distant complaint The burning hickory curtained the middle room with a ruddy warmth It was a period of extreme peace he slept for long hours in a deep chair or sat lost in a simulation of sleep living again in the past The present was increasingly immaterial unimportant old controversies occupied him long since stilled and among the memories of opera of Eames as a splendid girl forgotten roles were other vaguer associations impressions which seemed to linger from actual happenings but persistently evaded definition At times his eyes closed the glow of his fireplace burned hotter more lurid and was filled with faintly clamorous sounds at times there was woven through his half wakeful dreaming a monotonous beat such as the fall of a hammer He saw too strange and yet familiar faces — a girl in silk like an ex

travagant tea rose a countenance seamed and glistening with pain floated in shadow and then another mocked and mocked him Once he heard the drumming of rain close above and the illusion was so strong that he made his way to the door a black void was glistening with cold and relentless stars

Now he was standing by a dark hurrying river nothing else was visible and yet he was thrilled by a sense of utter rapture

He developed a feeling of the impermanence of life his hold upon it no stronger than the tenuous cord of a balloon straining impatiently in great unknown currents The future lost all significance reality there were only memories the vista behind was long and clear but the door to to morrow was shut Looking into his mirror the reflection was far removed it was hollow-cheeked and silvered unfamiliar He half expected to see a different face not less lean but more arrogant with a sharply defined chin The actual blurred visage accorded ill with his trains of thought it was out of place among the troops of gala youth

A wired letter a customary present of cigarettes came from Mariana on Christmas gifts from Charlotte and Bundy Provost There was champagne at his place for dinner and he sealed crisp money in envelope inscribed Rudolph Honduras and the names of the cook and maid He drank the wine solemnly the visions were gone and he saw himself as an old man lingering out of his time alone

There was however little sentimental melancholy in the realization he held an upright pride the inextinguishable accent of a black Penny His disdain for the commonality of life still dictated his prejudices He informed Rudolph again that the present opera was without song and again Rudolph gravely echoed the faith that melody was the heart of music

The winds grew even higher shriller the falls of snow vanished before drenching brown rains and the afternoons perceptibly lengthened There was arbutus on the slopes robins before he recognized that April was accomplished A farmer ploughed the vegetable garden behind the house and Honduras dragged the cedar bean poles from their resting place Mariana soon appeared

I wouldn t miss the spring at Shadrach for a hundred years of hibi cus she told him He gathered that she had been south She brought him great pleasure beat him with annoying frequency at sniff and was more companionable than ever before She had he thought forgot James Polder and he was careful to avoid the least reference to the latter Mariana was a sensible girl birth once more had told

She was better looking than he had remembered her more tranquil a distingui hed woman It was incredible that a man approximately her equal had not appeared Then without warning — they were seated on the porch gazing through the tender green

foliage of the willow at the vivid young wheat beyond — she said

' Howat I am certain that things are going badly with Jimmy He wrote to me willingly in the winter but twice since then he hasn t answered a letter "

He suppressed a sharp recurrent concern "It's that Harriet ' he told her capitally diffident ' You are stupid to keep it up What chance would he have had answering her letters married to you? '

"This is different, she replied confidently He saw that he had been wrong — nothing had changed, lessened Howat swore silently That damnable episode might well spoil her entire existence But he wisely avoided argument comment A warm current of air fragrant with apple blossoms, caught the ribbon like smoke of his cigarette and dissipated it She smiled with half-closed eyes at the new flowering of earth Her expression grew serious, firm I think we d better go out to Harrisburg she r marked elaborately casual ' and see Jimmy for ourselves "

He protested vehemently but — from experience in that quarter — with a conviction of futility ' She ll laugh at you " he told Mariana ' Haven t you any proper pride? She shook her head "Not a scrap It s just that quality in Jim that annoyed me and spoiled everything I d cook for them if it would do any good " Irritation mastered him This is shameful Mariana he declared ' Don t your position, your antecedents stand for

anything? If I had Jasper Penny here I would tell him what I thought of his confounded behaviour! He rose and walked the length of the porch and back

'The first part of next week?' she queried I won t go a mile he stated in sheer bravado Then said Mariana I must do it alone He muttered a period in which the term hussy was solely audible Which of us? she asked calmly "Actually he exploded I feel sorry for that Harriet I sympathize with her She got the precious James fair enough and the decent thing for you is to keep away

But I'm not decent either Mariana continued If you could know what is in my head you'd recognize that I seem to have no good qualities I don t want them Howat her voice intensified I want Jim

He was completely silenced by this desire persisting in spite of every established obstacle It summoned an increasing response at the core of hi being Such an attitude was more remotely his own but in him it had been purely negative an inhibition rather than a challenge he had kept out of life instead of actively defying it In him the family inheritance of blackness was subsiding with the rest

Howat maintained until the moment of their departure his protest his perverse community with Harriet Polder You'll find a happy house he

predicted and come home like a fool I hope you do It ought to help make you more reasonable She will tell James to give you a comfortable chair and apologize for not asking you to dinner She gazed through the car window without replying He realized that he had never seen Mariana more becomingly dressed — she wore a rough silver coloured suit with a short jacket a pale green straw hat like the new willow leaves across the blueness of her eyes and an innumerably ruffled and flounced waist of thinnest batiste A square deep emerald hung from a platinum chain about her neck and a hand stripped of its thick white glove showed an oppressive prismatic glitter of diamonds

The morning was filled with dense low grey cloud under which the river on their left flowed without a glimmer of brightness Howat was aware of an increasing sulphurous pall and suddenly the train was passing an apparently endless confusion of great corrugated iron sheds rows of towering smoking stacks enormous black cylinders systems of tracks over which shrilling locomotives hauled carloads of broken slag or bumped strings of trucks with reckless energy in and out of the grimy interiors The overpowering magnitude of the steel works — Howat Penny needed no assurance of its purpose — exceeded every preconception

Shut between the river and an abrupt hillside where scattered dwellings and sparse trees and ground were coated with a soft monotony of rese

brown dust the mills were jumbled in mile-long perspectives Above the immediate noise of the train he could hear the sullen blended roar of an infinity of strident sounds — the screaming of whistles a choked drumming thunder rushing blasts of air the shattering impact of steel rails raw steam and a multitudinous clangour of metal and jolting wheels and connective power He passed rusting mountains straddled by giant gantries the towering lifts of mammoth cranes banks of chalk white stone dizzy super structures mounted by spasmodic skips

As the train proceeded with scarcely abated speed and the vast operation continued without a break mill on mill file after file of stacks Howat Penny s senses were crushed by the spectacle of such incredible labour Suddenly a column of fire deep orange at the core raying through paler yellow to a palpitating white brilliancy shot up through the torn vapours the massed and shuddering smoke to the clouds and was sharply withdrawn in a coppery smother pierced by a rapid lance like thrust of steel blue flame

These stupendous miles were to-day the furnaces and forges that Gilbert Penny had built and operated in the pastoral clearings of the Province Howat recalled the single diminutive shed of Myrtle Forge the slender stream the wheel its sole power the solitary stack of Shadrach Furnace recreated in his vision opposed its insignificant bulk against the living greenery of overwhelming forests Now the

forests were gone obliterated by the mills that had grown out of Gilbert s energy and determination his pioneer courage His spirit the indomitable will of a handful of men a small isolated colony had swept forward in a resistless tide multiplying invention improvement with success until as Howat had seen their flares reached to the clouds their industry spread in iron cities James Polder had a part in this Here under the ringing walls of the steel mills he got a fresh comprehension of the bitter restless virility of the younger man

Out of the station Mariana furnished the driver of a public motor with James Polder s address and they twisted through congested streets past the domed Capitol rising from intense green sod flanked by involved groups of sculpture to a quieter reach lying parallel with the river They discovered Polder s house occupying a corner one of a short row of yellow brick with a scrap of lawn bound by a low wall and a porch continuous across the face of the dwellings

The door opened after a long interval and a woman with bare arms and a spotted kitchen apron admitted them to an interior faintly permeated with the odours of cooking There were redly varnished chairs upright piano a heavily framed saccharine print of loves and a flushed sleeping divinity a table scarred by burning cigarettes holding cerise knitting on needles one of which was broken glasses with dregs of beer a photograph in a tarnished sil

ver frame of Harriet de Barry Polder with undraped shoulders and an exploited dimple and a copy of a technical journal A fretful shrill barking rose at their heels and Howat Penny swung his stick at a diminutive silky white dog with matted, pinkish eyes, obsessed by an impotent fury

An indolent voice drifted from above ' Cherette!' And a low masculine protest was audible Mariana Jannan s face was inscrutable The woman continued audibly ' How can I — like this? You will have to see what it is A moment later James Polder drawing on a coat descended the stairs He saw Mariana at once and stood arrested with one foot on the floor and a hand clutching the rail A sudden pallor invaded his countenance and Howat turned away inspecting the print But he could not close his hearing to the suppressed eagerness, the stammering joy of Polder s surprise

'And you too he said to the elder with a crushing grip Howat immediately recognized that the other was marked by an obvious ill health his eyes were hung with shadows like smudges of the iron dust and his palm was hot and wet Harriet he called up the stair here s Miss Jannan and Mr Howat Penny to see us A complete silence above then a sharp rustle replied to his announcement

Harriet will be right down he continued fixing herself up a little first Have trouble finding us? Second Street is high for a foreman but we re moving out against the future

The dog maintained a stridulous barking and James Polder carried her in an ecsatsy of snarling ill temper out Cherette doesn't appreciate callers he stated with an expression that contradicted the mildness of his woras His gaze, Howat thought rested on Mariana with the intensity of a fanatic Arab at the apparition of Mohammed And Mariana smiled back with a penetrating comprehension and sympathy The proceeding made Howat Penny extremely uncomfortable it was — was barefaced He hoped desperately that something more appropriately casual would meet the appearance of Harriet Mariana said

You haven t been well Polder replied that it was nothing 'I get a night shift he explained and I ve never learned to sleep through the day We re working under unusual pressure too inhuman contracts success He smiled without gaiety

You didn t answer my letter' the outrageous Mariana proceeded Howat withered mentally at her cool daring and Polder now flushed avoided her gaze The necessity of answer was bridged by the descent of his wife Her face as always brightly coloured was framed in an instinctively effective twist of gold hair and she wore an elaborately braided white cloth skirt a magenta georgette crepe waist with a deep boyish collar, drawn tightly across her full soft body

Isn t it fierce she demanded cheerfully with Jim out as many nights as he s in bed? She pro-

duced a pasteboard package of popular cigarettes and offered them to Howat Penny and Mariana

Sorry I can t smoke any others, she explained striking a match I heard you saying he doesn t look right she addressed Mariana ' And it s certainly the truth. Who would with what he does? I tell him our life is all broke up One night stands used to get me but they re a metropolitan run compared with this Honest to God ' she told them good naturedly I ve threatened to leave him already I d rather see him a property man with me on the road

It must be a little wearing Mariana agreed 'but then you know your husband is a steel man This is his life Howat Penny could see the cordiality ebbing from the other woman s countenance Positively Mariana ought to be I can get that Harriet Pold r informed her We are only hanging on till Jim s made superintendent Then we ll be regular inhabitants Any other small thing? At the sharpening note of her voice James Polder hurriedly proceeded with general facts

You ll want to see the Works as much as I can show you Hardly any of the public are let through now It will interest you sir to see what the Penny iron trade has become I can take you down this afternoon Harriet will find us some lunch The latter moved in a sensuous deliberation followed by a thin acidulous trail of smoke into inner rooms

When do you have to go back? Polder asked

This evening" Howat told him "we just stopped to —'

To see how you were Mariana interrupted him baldly studying the younger man with a concerned frown "You ought to rest you know' she decided

That a possible' he returned 'I thought of asking for a couple of weeks I hurried back right after I was married They are coming to me She enigmatically regarded Howat Penny he saw that she was about to speak impetuously but to his great relief she stopped 'It s been pretty hard on Harriet' he said instead "After the stage and audiences and all that Mariana s expression was cold Confound her why didn t she help the fellow! Howat Penny fidgeted with his stick What a stew Polder had gotten himself into This was worse, even than the marriage threatened

Lunch was a spasmodic affair of cutlets hardening in grease blue boiled potatoes sandy spinach and blanched ragged bread There was more beer but Jim his wife proceeded liked whiskey and water with his meals The former glanced uneasily at Mariana tranquilly cutting up her cutlet The diamonds on her narrow delicate hand flashed the emerald at her throat was superb Their surroundings were doubly depressing contrasted with her fastidious dress and person Before her composure Harriet Polder seemed over florid a woman of trite phrases commonplace theatrical attitudes and emotions As lunch progressed the latter relapsed into a sulky si

lence she glanced surreptitiously at Mariana s apparel and consumed cigarettes with a straining assumption of easy indifference

Howat I enny was acutely uncomfortable and Polder scowled at his plate The whiskey and water shook in a tense unsteady hand He rose from the table with a violent relief He proposed almost immediately that they go over to the Works and Mariana turned pleasantly to his wife. Shall you get a hat? The other hesitated then asserted defiantly I ve always said I wouldn t go into that rackety place and I won t now It s bad enough to have it tramped back over things Mariana extended a hand Then good bye she proceeded I think we won t get back here We re tremendously obliged for the lunch It has been interesting to see where Jim lives Harriet Polder s cheeks were darker than pink as they moved out to the sidewalk Jim she called with an unmistakably proprietary sounding of the familiar diminution don t forget my cigarettes and a half pound of liver for Cherette

XXXI

JAMES POLDER conducted them to the river, sweeping away in a wide curve beneath solid grey stone bridges into a region of towering hills They turned to the left and walking on a high embankment passed blocks of individually pretentious dwellings edifices of carved granite alternating with the simpler brick faces of an older period A narrow whitely dusty sweep of green park was followed by a speedy degeneration of the riverside the houses shrunk to rows of wood marked by the grime of steel mills Soon after they reached a forbidding fence and passing a watchman s inspection entered into a clamorous region of sheds tracks and confusing levels such as Howat Penny had viewed from the train

I m in the open hearth' Polder told them leading the way over a narrow boardwalk still skirting the broad expanse of the river It s a process really but the whole mill is called after it We make steel from iron scrap that s our specialty in the Medal Works and our stuff's as good as the best The bigger concerns mostly use pig Turn in here They were facing the towering end of an iron shed and mounted a steep ascent to gain the upper entrance The multiplication of noises beat in an in

creasing volume about Howat Penny Below him a locomotive screeched with a freight of slag beyond was a heap of massive, broken moulds and a train of small trucks held empty iron boxes beside an enormous bank of iron scrap dominated by a huge crane swinging a circular magnet that dispassionately picked up ton loads and bore them to the waiting cars

Inside he gazed through a long vista under a roof lost in tenebrious shadow On one side were ranged the furnace a continuous bank of brick bound in iron each furnace with five doors closed with black slides in which a round opening emitted an intolerable dazzling white glare. But few men Howat thought were visible in proportion to the magnitude of the work deliberately engaged with leather shields hanging from their wrists and blue spectacles pushed up on their grimy brows

A crane advanced with the shrill racket of an electric gong its operator caged in midair and beneath lean grappling chains swinging A grinding truck filling the width of floor moved forward to where Howat stood It was Polder told him the charging machine An iron beam projected opposite the furnace doors and it was locked into one of the charging boxes filled with scrap metal standing on the rails against the furnaces A man behind him dragged forward a lever the slide which covered a door rose ponderously on a blinding incandescent core and the beam thrust forward into the blaze

turning round and round in the emptying of the box It was withdrawn the slide dropped and the machine retreated its complex movements controlled by a single engineer at crackling switches where the power leaped in points of light like violets.

At another furnace an opened door, where the heat poured out in a constricting blast, workmen were shovelling in powdery white stone moving up with their heads averted and quickly retreating with shielding arms That s dolomite ' James Polder s explanations went rapidly forward. 'They are banking up the furnace The other in the bins is ferro manganese " He procured a pair of specta cles and with a protected gaze Howat looked into a furnace an appalling space of apparently bubbling milk over which played sheets of ignited gases The skin on his forehead shrivelled like scorching paper

I particularly wanted you to see a heat tapped ' Polder told Mariana And they're making a test at number four They followed him to where a small ladle of metal had been dipped out of a furnace It was poured, with a red gold shower of sparks into a mould then dropped in a trough of water The miniature ingot broken under the wide sweep of a sledge was examined by a lean grizzled workman — " the melter ' — who nodded We must get back of the furnace Polder continued indicating a nar row opening between brick walls through the un stopped chinks of which seethed the scorifying blaze.

Howat Penny stood at a railing looking down into an apparent confusion of slag and cars pits and gigantic ladles and upright moulds set upon circular bases A crane rumbled forward grappled a hundred ton ladle, a fabulous iron pot and petulantly deposited it under a channel extending out from the base of the furnace where they had been stationed A workman steadied himself below their level and picked with a long iron bar at a plugged opening It was James Polder went on the most dangerous moment of the process — sometimes the furnace blows out The labour of tapping was prolonged until Howat was conscious of an oppress ve tension Workmen had gathered waiting in the pit. More appeared along the railing above This was he felt the supreme the dramatic height of steel making The men suddenly seemed puny insignificant before the stupendous volcanic energy they had evoked The tapping stopped Polder commenced It will be rammed out from the front —

A stunning white flare filled the far roof with a dazzling illumination and in a dull explosion a terrific billowing of heat a cataract of liquid steel burst out through lambent orange and blue flames It poured searing the vision into the ladle over which rosy clouds accumulated in a bank drifting through the great space of the shed Nothing Howat thought could contain control the appalling expansion the furious volume of seething white metal He was obliged to turn away blinded by

sheets of complementary green hanging before his eyes

The uproar subsided the flooding steel became bluer a solid stream curving into the black depths of the ladle Vapours of green and sulphur and lilac shivered into the denser ruby smoke and rising silver spray Polder called a warning into Mariana's ear, they drew back as a lump of coal was heaved up from the pit into the ladle A dull vermilion blaze followed and Howat Penny partly heard an explanation — recarburizing" He could now see the steel bubbling up to the rim of the container Men Polder said shortly, had fallen in Utterly unthinkable With a sudorific heat that drove them still farther back the slag boiling on the steel flowed in a gold cascade over a great lip into a second receptacle below That was soon filled and gorgeous streams and pools widened across the riven ground The steel itself escaped in a milky incandescence A wild heat James Polder told them pleased 'The bottom of a furnace may drop out I was almost caught in the pit at Cambria The crane chains swung forward picked up the ladle of molten metal and shifted it through the air to a position over a circular group of moulds There a valve opened the steel poured into a central pipe

Bottom filled Polder concluded assisting Mariana over the precarious flooring 'the metal rises into the ingot forms

They descended again by the blackened brick box

like office of the superintendent to the level of the pit retraced the way over the boardwalk They passed a cavernous interior filled with a continuous crashing where a great sheet of flushing steel was propelled over a system of rollers through a black dripping compression I can take you to the Sen ate James Polder told them once more outside or the Engineers Society Dinner will be ready at the club

He conducted them into the serious interior of a large solidly constructed dwelling that had been transformed into a club The dining room was al ready filling but they secured a small table against the wall Across the floor ten or twelve men were gathered in a circle Some Howat thought were surprisingly young for the evident authority in their manner pronouncements others were grey weather worn men with immobile faces often lost in the mid dle of a gay period in a sudden gravity of thought silent calculation He saw the smooth deft hand of draughtsmen and scarr d powerful hands that like James Polder s had laboured through appren ticeship in pit and mill shop

He recognized that Polder was more drawn than he had first observed He was sapped by the crush ing entity of the steel works the enormous heat and energy and strain of the open hearth If the younger did not lay off he would unquestionably break Nevertheless Howat was totally unprepared for the amazing suggestion quietly advanced by

Mariana "Jimmy" she said "couldn t you come to Shadrach for those two weeks? You d find the quiet there wonderful And any doctor will advise you to leave your family for a proper rest I'm certain Howat would be as nice as possible"

A sudden patent longing leaped to James Polder s countenance Actually he stuttered with a surprised delight Damn it there was nothing for him Howat, to do but stare like a helpless idiot He ought to say something second Mariana's impudent invitation at once She ignored him gazing intently at the younger man He too meeting Mariana s eyes had apparently totally forgot the unimportant presence of Howat Penny And he had been married to his Harriet for a scant half year! Howat Penny thought mechanically of the Polders depressing house the odours of old cooking and cheap cigarettes the feverish yapping of the silky animal Cherette with matted pinkish eyes The precipitant, prideful young fool! Why hadn t he held onto the merest memory the most distant chance in the world of Mariana rather than fling himself his injured self opinion into this stew?

Don t say it can t be managed she persisted 'Anything may It s absolutely necessary you can get a prescription — two weeks of green valley and robins and country eggs Howat will take your money from you at penny snuff and I ll — I ll come out for dinner

"Harriet thought of going back to the family

he replied but it might — he turned at last to Howat Penny Would you have me? he asked directly What in thunder choice of reply did he have? Howat couldn t point out the shamelessness of such an arrangement Harriet it seemed was not to be considered just as if she were a merely dis interested connection He issued a belated period to the effect that Shadrach was spacious and Rudolph a capable attendant It was he saw sufficient

We can write' said Mariana She endeavoured to caress Howat s hand but he indignantly frustrated her

I ll have to get back to the hearth James Polder announced regretfully 'It s been wonderful he told Mariana Jannan Howat scraped his chair at the baldness of Polder s pleasure Your work is tremendous Jim she replied the only stirring thing I have ever known in a particularly silly world But you mustn t let it run you too into steel rails President Polder she smiled brilliantly at him

Why not? queried James the sanguine at once defiant haggard and intense

XXXII

THE following day Howat Penny was both weary and irritable Mariana declared remorsefully that she had selfishly dragged him away from Shadrach and proposed countless trivial amends which he fretfully blocked He had no intention of affording her such a ready escape from a sense he hoped of error and responsibility Before dinner however, he found himself walking with her over the deep green sod that reached to the public road below A mock orange hedge enclosed his lawn bounding the cross roads the upper course leading to Myrtle Forge and beyond they passed on the left the collapsed stone walls and fallen shingles of what evidently had been a small blacksmith s shed Farther along they came to the sturdy shell of an old single-room building erected perhaps when Shadrach Furnace was new with weeds climbing through the rotten floor and a fragment of steps rising to the mouldering peak of a loft still clinging to a wall

Without definite purpose they turned from the public way into an overgrown path banked with matted blackberry bushes and were soon facing the remains of the Furnace It had been solidly con

structed of unmasoned stone bound by iron rods and its bulk was largely unaffected by time The hearth had fallen in choked by luxuriant greenery but the blank sides mounted to meet the walled path reaching out to its top from the abrupt hill against which it had been placed Before it foundations could still be traced and above a rectangle of windowless stone walls survived roofless and desolate An abandoned road turned up the hill and they followed it to where they could gaze into the upper ruin and the Furnace top below Everywhere nature had marked or twisted aside cut stone and wood with its living greenery Farther down a pathlike level followed the side of the hill ending abruptly in a walled fall and a confusion of broken beams iron braces and section of a large wheel like circumference Out beyond were other crumbling remains of old activity — a stone span across the dried course of a water way and a wide bank showing through a hardy vegetation the grey brown inequalities of slag

The stillness broken only by the querulous melody of a robin and a beginning faint piping of frogs was amazingly profound after the roaring energy of the Medial Works The decay of Shadrach Furnace showed ab olute against the crashing miles of industry on the broad river A breath of honeysuckle lifted to Howat Penny the sky was primrose Mariana moved closer to him and took his arm They said nothing

A warm light was spilling across the darkening grass from the lower windows of his dwelling blur ring in a dusk under the high leafage of aged ma ples The white roses were already in bud on the vine climbing the lattices at his door, and Mariana fixed one in his buttonhole ' Howat she said ' it isn t as if you were doing it just for Jim but for a man any man really sick I ll not even ask you to think of it for me He can sit on the porch and converse with your owls and poke about over the hills

Howat considered the advisability of attempting to extract a promise from her that she would stay away from Shadrach if James Polder was there He considered it — very momentarily The possi bility he asserted to himself was without any allevi ating circumstance What in heaven s name would Charlotte think if as it well might the knowledge came to her that Mariana and a Polder — that name she never repeated — a married Polder without his wife were poking over the hills together at Shad rach? She would have him Howat examined for lunacy Mariana demanded too much He told her this with the dessert

' It s only the commonest charity ' she repeated Her attack rapidly veered "Howat ' she asked "do you really dislike Jimmy? Certainly he as serted he — he disapproved of him altogether A headstrong young donkey who had made a shock ing mess of his life He would have to make the best

of a bad affair for which no one was to blame but himself "It is terrific she agreed almost cheerfully and he had a vague sense of having somehow delivered himself into her hands Perhaps something can still be done she said frowning increasing the dangers of his position He managed by a stubborn silence to check further conversation in that direction hoping vainly that James Polder couldn t come that Harriet sensibly would insist on his accompanying her or that Byron would solemnly intervene

Mariana later displaying a letter dispelled his wishes It s been arranged quite easily she told him Harriet will go home I d like to be here when he arrives but I can t You ll be a dear Howat won t you? she begged I m certain James will give you no trouble And do send him to bed early" At this he grew satirical and she laughed in an unaccustomed nervous manner that upset him surprisingly Honduras drove her to the station the next morning and three days later deposited James Polder on the worn stone threshold under the climbing rose

After dinner the younger man faced him squarely across the apricot glow of the lamp in the middle room This is the third time I ve come here without an invitation from you he said directly It was Mariana this last I shut my mouth on what I d once have crammed down your throat and came like any puppy It wasn't on account of my health

there are miles of quiet country it wasn't — he hesitated then went on — 'altogether because of Mariana I wanted to watch you closer I want to find out what you are like inside, so I might under stand some — some other things better I can get out if it s a rank failure'

Howat issued a polite general dissent Now right there Polder stated you don t want me you d rather I was a thousand miles away, dead Well — why don t you say so?' He had not the least conception of a decent reticence of address Howat Penny thought resentfully at the dis comfort aroused by the young man s sharp at tack

Certain amenities he observed coldly have been accepted as desirable as obligations for — he hesitated casting about for a phrase that would not too conspicuously exclude James Polder "Say it" the latter burst out rudely gentlemen And you all stand about with one thing to say and an other in your head

A degree of perception is always admirable Howat Penny instructed him That s a nasty one Polder acknowledged but I got into it my self I can see that' His hand seared with la bour was pressed on the table and the elder realized that since he had witnessed a heat tapped he was not so censorious of the broken nails the lines of in delible black He caught James Polder s gaze and turned from its intense questioning Young cheeks

had no business to be so gaunt Polder picked up the figurine in red clay studied it with a troubled brow and replaced it with a gesture of hopeless ness Possibly' Howat Penny unexpectedly remarked ' possibly you find beauty in a piece of open hearth steel

It s useful Polder declared 'it has a tensile strength I know what it will do This he indicated the fragment of a grace razed over twenty three hundred years before is good for nothing tha I see Now Howat told himself it was merely a qu stion of tensile strength His old enthusiasms his passionate admiration for the operas of Chris topher Gluck the enthusiasms and admirations of his kind were being pushed aside for things of more obvious practicality The very term that had dis tinguished his world men of breeding had been dis card d Individuals like James Polder blunt of speech contemptuous labour scarred were para mount to-day

His thoughts, he realized were a part of the questioning thrust on him by th intrusion of Mari ana s unfortunate affair into his old age She was always dragging him to a perplexing spectacle for which he had neither energy nor inclination But he d be damned if he would allow the importuniti s of the young man beyond the table to complicate further his difficulties and he retired abruptly be hind the *Saturday Review* ' You d better get along up he said brusquely after a little

Breakfast at an end they settled into a not uncomfortable mutual silence They smoked James Polder unfolded newspapers which he neglected to read Howat went through the periodicals with audible expressions of displeasure He wondered when Mariana would appear Mariana made a fool of him that was evident however he would put his foot on any philandering about Shadrach. He could be as blunt as James Polder when the occasion demanded After lunch the latter fell asleep in his chair on the porch pallidly insensible of the sparkling flood of afternoon Howat rose and went into the house It was indecent to see a countenance so wearily unguarded, shorn of all protective aggression Mariana walked in unannounced

Why didn t you telephone for Honduras?" he complained Always some infernal difference in what you do She frowned Suddenly she admitted I wasn t in a hurry to get here I almost went back Idiotic

Sensible it seems to me he commented That Polder is asleep on the porch. She nodded Splendid And you needn t try to look fierce I can see through you and out the back' He lit a cigarette angrily Going to stay for the night? he demanded Several she replied coolly Three can play sniff

Look here Mariana he proclaimed ' I won t have any nonsense do you understand?

We can keep a photograph of Harriet on the table

James Polder entered and put a temporary end to his determined speech When the former saw Mariana his shameless pleasure Howat thought was beyond credence Positively neither of them paid any more attention to him than they did to Rudolph His irritation gave place to a deeper realization that an impossible situation threatened There was nothing obviously that he could do to-day but he would speak seriously to Mariana to morrow one or both of them would have to leave Shadrach This determination took the present weight from his con science and pottering about small concerns of his own he ignored them comfortably

They appeared late dirty and hot for dinner and it was eight o clock before Mariana came down in a gown like a white-petalled flower She wore no rings but about her throat was a necklace of old fashioned seed pearls in loops and rosettes It s family she told them it belonged to Caroline Penny And she married a Quaker too a David Forsythe" She stopped suddenly and Howat Penny recalled the tra dition that Caroline Penny Gilbert s daughter had appropriated her sister Myrtle s suitor Mariana favoured him with a fleet glance the quiver of a reprehensible wink He glared back at her choking with suppressed wrath I have a wonderful idea for to morrow she proceeded tranquilly we ll take

lunch and leave Honduras and go to Myrtle Forge for the day

Her design was unfolded so rapidly her directions to Rudolph so explicit that he had no opportunity to oppose his plan of sending her away in the morning and his impotence committed him to her suggestion She could go in the evening almost as well After dinner he rattled the dominoes significantly but Mariana smiling at him absently went through the room and out upon the porch Polder with an obscure sentence followed her A soft rain sounded on the porch roof but there was no wind the night was warm

Howat glanced at his watch after a period of restful ease and saw that it was past ten He moved resolutely outside Mariana was banked with cushions in the canvas swing and Polder sat with his body extended his hands clasped behind his head in a gloomy revery The night apparently had robbed her countenance of any bloom more than once in the past year Howat had seen her stamped with the premonitory scarring of time Polder rose as he approached and Mariana struggled upright

Good night she said ungraciously to them both and flickered away through the dark James Polder was savagely biting his lips his hands the elder saw were clenched Your wife Howat proceeded how is she? Polder gazed at him stonily without

reply I asked after your wife Howat repeated irritably No the other at last said you reminded me of her I suppose you are right He turned and walked abruptly from the porch into the slowly dropping rain

XXXIII

THE road to Myrtle Forge mounted between rolling cultivated fields the scattered stone ruins of walls erected in the earliest iron days and after a pastoral course came to the Forge dwelling its shuttered bulk set in a tangle of bushes and rank grass An ancient beech tree swept the ground with smooth grey limbs surrounded by long accumulated dead leaves James Polder shut off the motor by the low, stone wall that supported the lawn from the roadway he crossed to the farm where the house keys were kept and Howat and Mariana moved slowly forward A porch added the former said in Jasper Penny s time extended at the left and they stood on the broken flooring and gazed down at a featureless tangle once a garden and the gnarled remainder of a small apple orchard beyond

Polder soon returned and they proceeded to a door on the further side where the kitchen angle partly enclosed a flagging of broad stones Inside the house empty of furnishing was a place of echoes muffled in dust the insidious dank odours of corrupting wood and plaster walls with melancholy, superimposed stripping papers older sombrely blistered paint and panelled wainscoting varnished

in an imitation yellow graining It was without a relic of past dignity Mariana was unable to dis cover a souvenir of the generations of Pennys that had filled the rooms with the stir of their living Once more outside they sat on the stone threshold of an office like structure back of the main dwelling and indulged in cigarettes

The disturbing tension of last night Howat thought comfortably had vanished Mariana was flippant James Polder enveloped in indolent ease

The Forge Howat Penny told them was be low A path descended across a steep face of sparse grass and at the bottom Polder s interest revived

It stood there he indicated a fallen shed beyond a masoned channel choked with the broken stones of its walls and tangled shrubbery You don t sup pose a joke that size was the great Gilbert s plant Here s the drop for the water power yes and the iron pinions of the overshot wheel He climbed down a precarious wall and stood perhaps twelve feet below them Securing a rough bolt he brought it up for their inspection Look at that forging he cried after it has lain around for a century and a half Like silk Charcoal iron and it was ham mered too Metal isn t half worked any more We could turn that into steel at almost nothing a ton He showed them in the mouldering shed the founda tion of the anvil traced the probable shafting of the trip hammer marked the location of the hearths

Three he decided ' and a cold trickle of air A

nigger pumping a bellows probably No they could get that from the wheel he drew an explanatory diagram in the blackened dust

With the lunch basket on the running board of the motor they ate sitting on the low boundary wall of the lawn The heat increased through the late May noon and Howat remained while Mariana and James Polder wandered in the direction of the orchard Finally the sun forced the former to move and he too proceeded in a desultory manner, entering the shade of a grove of old maples The trees their earliest red leafage already emerald followed the dry channel cut back from Canary Creek to the Forge and he soon emerged at the broad flashing course of the stream A flat rock jutted into the hurrying water by an overthrown dam its sun heated expanse now in shadow and he stayed listening to the gurgling flow Far above him a hawk wheeled in ambient space a mill whistle sounded remotely from Jaffa

The thought of Mariana hovered at the back of his lulled being all he desired he told himself was her complete happiness He might even have become reconciled to James Polder His first unfavourable opinion of the latter he realized had been modified by — by time He had judged Polder solely in the light of an old standard The fellow was painfully honest good stuff there iron the iron of the Pennys But the other strain had betrayed him A cursed shame The material of the present moulded perhaps into seemingly new forms was always that

of the past This Polder was Essie Scofield and Jasper Byron He Howat Penny was Penny and Jannan and Penny — Daniel James Casimir and Howat once more the older Howat who had married the widow of Felix Winscombe Black again He wondered what the blackness not spent like his own had brought the other A headstrong dark youth with the characteristic sloping eyebrows and slender vigorous carriage The traditional rebellious spirit had involved Jasper in disgrace it had thinned his own blood

Footfalls approached through the trees and the others joined him James Polder extended himself on the rock and Mariana sat with her hands clasped about her slim knees A silence intensified by th whispering stream enveloped them The hawk circled above and Howat had an extraordinary sense of the familiarity of the bird hanging in limitless space of the warm stone and water choking in a smooth eddy He had as a boy fished there But his brain momentarily swam with a poignant un recognizable emotion different from the sensation of childhood He rose confused and giddy With old age he muttered

Mariana followed It s all over she announced decisively We ll drive back and leave to-day She sighed That s gone already James Polder showed her the sun slipping toward the western hills She moved up to him laid her hand on his arm Howat Penny went ahead He must speak to her

after dinner As the motor slowly gathered momentum he turned and looked back at the dark pinkish dwelling in its tangle of grass and bushes run wild Dusk appeared to have already gathered over it although the sun still shone elsewhere in lengthening dusty gold bars the wide-spread beech was sombre against blank shutters the chimneys broken and cold

XXXIV

A LETTER for James Polder was at Shadrach and he opened it immediately glancing over its scrawled sheet Howat saw a curious expression overspread the other s countenance He called Mariana! in a sharp tone She appeared from the foot of the steps

Harriet never went home he told her this is *from Pittsburgh She s back on the stage* A premonitory dread filled Howat Penny Mariana stood quietly her gaze lifted to Polder She never went home he repeated but writes that suddenly she — she didn t want to and couldn t stand Harrisburg another week She saw some one and had a part that ought to be good offered to her and so —

Is that all Jim?

No he replied there is more absolutely unjustified I think I d like you to read it It would be best' Mariana took the letter and followed its *irregular course It s true enough she said* quietly at the end But I don t in the least mind Jim She had a perfect right to something of the sort That is — I m not annoyed about what she says of me but it will upset you terribly And it has been my fault from the first He protested vehemently but she stopped him with a gesture then walked to the door opening on the porch where her

head up she stood gazing out into the serene, failing light

James Polder followed her and Howat heard the screen softly close He was about to light a cigarette but his hand shaking he laid it on the table He put up his glass, without purpose and then let it drop Rudolph was placing the silver for dinner old forks faintly marked with a crest that Isabel Howat had brought to her husband A recurrence of the afternoon s sense of the continuity of all living flowed over him whispering with old voices old longing and sorrow and regret, mingled dim features and the broken clasping of hands He saw Mariana sweeping in a pale current — a remote eternal passion winding through the transient body of life She smiled her subdued mocking gaiety infinitely appealing and vanished

They came in to dinner without changing the informal garb of the day James Polder was silent disturbed but Mariana was serenely commonplace Her voice clear and high went unimportantly on until turning to Howat Penny she said without the changing of a tone I want James to take me back to Harrisburg with him but he won t Howat endeavoured to meet this insanity with the silence usually opposed to Mariana s frequent wildness of statement His knife scraped sharply against a plate but in the main he successfully preserved an unmoved countenance Now that Harriet has surrendered him she persisted, "I don t see why I can't

be considered It is the commonest sense — Jim can t live alone properly in that house I can t exist properly without him You see Howat how reasonable it seems What he did perceive was that his attitude of inattention must be sharply deserted

Your words Mariana he said coldly proper and reasonable in the connection you have used them would be ridiculous if they weren t disgraceful I have been patient with a certain amount of rash talk yes — and conduct but this must be the end I had intended to have you leave Shadrach this morning then later Either that or I ll be forced to make my excuses to James Polder He glanced with a veiled anxiety at the latter but could read nothing from the lowered pinched countenance

We could leave together if you are tired of us Mariana continued It s James really who is making all the trouble He has some stupid idea about nobility of conduct and my best good But the real truth is that he s afraid for me of course and so he won t listen

Won t you show her that it is impossible? the younger man cried at Howat Penny ' I can t take advantage of her heavenly courage She doesn t realize the weight of opinion It would make —

'Stuff she interrupted ' You d make steel and I would make an occasional dessert You must be told Jimmy that the afternoon calling you have confused with life really isn t done any more You

have been brought up in rather a deadly way You ought to be saved from yourself I am a very mature person and I am advising you calmly

The dinner had come to an end a decanter in old fashioned blue and gold cutting of brandy, a silver basket of oranges the coffee cups and glasses were all that remained and James Polder played with the cut fruit the half full cordial glass before him I am going to be brutally frank Jimmy,' she said again You know that is a habit of mine too You are a very brilliant young man but you are not omnipotent — you require stiffening like a collar And I would be a splendid laundress for you Harriet is a long shot too lenient I might not be so comfortable to live with but I'd be bracing I'd have you in that dirty little superintendent's box in no time

He made no reply and obviously tormented automatically squeezed a half orange into his goblet Then he took a sip of brandy

Together James Mariana asserted 'we would go up like a kite By yourself — forgive me — you haven't enough patience enough balance you wouldn't fly steadily You might break all your sticks on the ground' He moodily emptied what remained of his brandy into the goblet and orange juice and pushed it impatiently away "I'd rather do that he answered than try to carry you with me on such a flight

Howat Penny was conscious of a diminution of his

fears He had entirelv underrated James Polder the latter was an immense sight steadier than Mari ana His thoughts strayed momentarily to Harriet back again in her public orbit He could imagine that she had found Harrisburg insuperably dull the hours with only Cherette empty after the emotional debauches of the plays elected by Vivian Blane Yes this young Polder would stand admirably firm Mariana frowned at the cobalt smoke of her ciga rette I am in a verv bad temper she told them No one for a minute thinks of what my feeling may be You are both entirely concerned with your own nice sense of virtue

Not at all but of your future Howat Penny asserted

Her lower lip assumed the contempt of which it was pre-eminently capable She made no immediate reply James Polder s fingers absently clasped the goblet before him he drew it toward his plate tipped the thick liquid it contained Just what do you recommend me to do? Mariana challenged Howat

Go through with a lifeful of winters like the last! Marry another Sam Lewis! I am not celebrated for reliability it is only with Jimmy — she broke off Howat Penny recalled her callous expression photographed in Egyptian dress at a period ball her description of the hard riding and reckless parties of the transplanted English colonies in the south

Polder lifted the goblet to his lips but set it back

untasted Howat looked away from Mariana's scornful interrogation unable to reply Finally I am old as you once reminded me' he stated I'm out of my time don't understand I can only remember and remembering isn't any longer of use The men I knew the kind I hope I was would ruin themselves a hundred times before compromising a woman Polder appears to understand that And women I had the privilege of meeting sacrificed themselves with a smile for what you dismiss as mere stupidity God knows which is right They looked the loveliest of creatures then There was a standard we thought high Things a man couldn't do But I don't know — it seems so long ago He stopped to watch James Polder take a sip of the mixture in his hand The latter tasted it slowly and then emptied the goblet. His face was blank with eyes nearly closed

I could carry Jimmy up in my hands' Mariana said Don't she added vaguely as he squeezed out the remaining half of his orange and poured fresh brandy into it "It's curious he told her not at all bad

They moved out of the dining room and Mariana and Polder continued to the porch Howat stood with a hand resting on the mahogany cigarette box he had the feeling of a man unexpectedly left by a train thundering into the distance It would not stop back for him now he was dropped He sank relaxed into an accustomed chair his brain surren

dered its troubling the waking somnolence settled over him He was conscious of his surrounding recognized its actuality yet at the same time it seemed immaterial like the setting of a dream He roused himself after a little and smoked nodding his head to emphasize the points of his thought

This Polder had shown the instinct of *breeding* while Mariana was — just what she was he couldn t for the life of him determine A hussy he decided temporarily After all his own time when black and white had been distinguishable was best Howat Penny relinquished with a sigh the effort to penetrate to-day he was content to be left behind out of the grinding rush the dizzy speed of pro gression His day when black had been black was immeasurably superior the women had been more charming the men erect clothed in proper garb and pride Where now could be seen such an audience as Dr Damrosch had gathered for his first season of German opera? Not certainly at the perform ance he had heard with Mariana two no — three winters ago A vulgarized performance in the spirit of a boulevard cafe The whole present air he told himself was wrong

He looked at his watch and was surprised to see that it was past ten Not a sound came from the porch and he determined to go outside exercise the discretion which Mariana had cast to the winds However he didn t stir he could not summon the en ergy necessary for the combating of their impetuous

youth. He unfolded a paper but it drooped on his knees slid finally to the floor Then Mariana appeared walked swiftly without a word through the room and vanished upstairs Not even a civil period at the end of the evening After another long wait James Polder entered The latter stood uneasily by the table with a furrowed brow a ridiculous twitching mouth

Polder went out into the dining room where through the doorway Howat Penny could see him hovering over the silver basket of orange placed upon the sideboard If you don t mind he called back and there were a rattle of knives a thin ring of glass The light was dim beyond and he stood in the doorway with the brandy decanter and orange juice He drained the mixture and leaned absorbed against the woodwork This is a hell of a world! he exclaimed suddenly Everything worth having is fenced off A woman won t understand Does any one suppose that I don t want Mariana! It s the responsibility She s right — I am afraid of it! And she laughed at me Nothing cowardly in her his voice deepened

It is ignorance Howat stated

I thought so for a minute you are wrong She s had more experience than we d get in a thousand years The life she knows would fix that She talked me into a tangled foolishness in five minutes made me look like a whiskered hypocrite Nothing I said sounded real and yet I must be right Sup

pose Harriet should turn nasty suppose — oh a *thousand things*

It isn t arguable Howat Penny agreed

This afforded the other no consolation What is she to do? he demanded Mariana won t settle quietly against a wall Sh told you that She s full of — of a sort of energy that must be at something Mariana hasn t the anchor of most women — respectability

Am I to gather that that is no longer considered admirable? the elder inquired If you gather anything you are lucky Polder replied gloomily I m not sure about my own name Good night he disappeared abruptly

Above Howat slowly made his preparations for retiring infinitely weary Waking problems fell from him like a leaden weight into the sea of unconsciousness He was relieved at breakfast to see Mariana come down in a hat with the jacket of her suit on an arm He waited for her to indicate the train by which she was leaving so that he could tell Honduras to have the motor ready but she sat around in a dragging silence Polder walked up and down the room in which they were gathered Howat wished he would stop his clattering movement An expression of ill nature deepened in Mariana she looked her ugliest and James Polder was perceptibly fogged from a lack of sleep Finally he said

Look here we can t go on like this He stopped in front of Mariana with a quivering face

She raised her eyebrows "Come outside" he begged ' What s the use? she replied but at the same time she rose "Don t get desperate Howat, she said over her shoulder ' Even I can t do any more I can only take my shamelessness back to Andalusia Polder held open the screen door and as without her jacket she went out Howat Penny had a final glimpse of the man bending at her side Like two fish in a net he thought ungraciously He was worn out by their infernal flopping With a determined movement of his shoulders a fixing of his glass he turned to the accumulation of his papers

Later he heard the changing gears of a motor He thought for a moment that it was Honduras at his own car then he recognized the stroke of a far heavier engine The powerful ungraceful bulk of an English machine was stopping at his door Immediately after he distinguished the slightly harsh dominating voice of Peter Provost. The latter entered followed by Kingsfrere Jannan Peter Provost a member of the New York family and connection of the Jannans had since the elder Jannan s death charge of the family s interest in the banking firm of Provost Jannan and Provost He occupied Howat knew a position of general advisor to Charlotte and her children He was a large man who had never lost the hardness of a famous university career in the football field with a handsome cold countenance and spiked grey moustache He shook

hands with Howat Penny and plunged directly into his present purpose

Kingsfrere he said has heard some cheap *stuff in the city principally about that young Pol*der married last fall Personally I laughed at it but Charlotte seemed upset This Polder s wife an actress has left her husband and gone back to the stage because — so Byron asserted you know Byron — Mariana had broken up their home

Old Polder said just that Kingsfrere affirmed And that wasn t all — he added that Mariana was out here with the fellow

Provost laughed

Well Howat Penny replied James Polder is staying at Shadrach He was asked here because his health was threatening He had two weeks leave and although I wasn t really anxious I said he might recuperate with me

And Mariana? Provost inquired

' *Came out day before yesterday late leaving this* morning

Howat Penny was conscious of a growing anger There was no reason for his submitting to an interrogation by Peter Provost he didn t have to justify his actions the selection of his guests and *he had no intention of explaining* his attitude toward Mariana But Provost it became evident had no inclination to be intrusive It was he made that clear wholly Charlotte But Kingsfrere Jannan was increasingly impatient Where is Polder? he

demanded Howat surveyed him with neither favour nor reply Suddenly he understood the feeling of both men — they considered that he was too old to have any grip or comprehension of life They were quietly but obviously relegating him to the back o the scene His anger mounted he was about to make a sharp reply when he paused There was a possibility that they were right he was undoubt edly old and he had been unable to influence turn Mariana in the slightest degree He didn t approve of her present head strong course only a few hours ago he had voluntarily gladly relinquished all effort to comprehend it

Perhap Provost suggested since we are here we d better talk to him I suppose they re out about the place You could send Rudolph Howat replied that he would find them himself He wanted now to prepare James Polder for any inci dental unpleasantness The latter he knew had a hasty temper a short store of patience After all he had acted very well in a difficult situation It had been Mariana Howat P nny was aware of a grow ing sympathy for young Polder His was a more engaging person than Kingsfrere s pasty presence and sharp reputation at cards He got his hat and went out over the thick smooth sod into the slum berous blue radiance of the early summer noon

He found Mariana and James Polder sitting on a bank by the Furnace ' Peter Provost s here with Kingsfrere he told them quietly They want to

see James about some nonsense bantered around town Polder rose quickly instantly an tagonistic ' At the house? he demanded already moving away Mariana stopped him with a hand on his shoulder Don t pay any attention to what they may say Jimmy she commanded It isn t Peter Provost s affair and King frere in a fatherly pose is a scream They moved forward together I ll see them she added cuttingly

I will attend to this James Polder told her I don t want any woman explaining my actions They haven t a whisper on me I m glad enough of an opportunity to talk to a man

If you lose your temper — Howat commenced but Mariana impatiently interrupted him Why shouldn t Jim lose his temper? she demanded I would Personally I d be glad if he did although it mightn t be fortunate for King frere He s a good deal of a dumpling But I will be furious if you look guilty Tell them we re mad about each other and that I am waiting for the smallest encourage ment to go with you

Howat Penny left Mariana at the door and went in with Polder Provost was seated with an open paper Kingsfrere studying the photograph of Scal chi This said Howat generally is my guest James Polder Peter Provost extended his square powerful hand but the other Jannan made no movement *Well? Polder demanded aggressively* Howat Penny proceeded through the room to the

porch where he met Mariana They walked to the further end and found chairs What makes me sick Mariana proceeded ' is the way men calmly take everything into their own hands as if women were still tied up naughty bundles Jim will have all the fun and he has only said 'no in horrified tones

Again he could think of no adequate reply He listened in vain for the sound of raised voices within What in heaven s name brought them?' Howat told her what he had heard ' I m glad I did break up that mess they called a home' she asserted 'It was rotten with stale beer and half pounds of liver for that disgusting animal!'

The heat increased in waves a wagon passing on the road below was enveloped in a cloud of dust ' I wish they d hurry' Mariana said sharply Howat Penny thought he heard Kingsfrere speak ing in abrupt periods Then a chair scraped and Peter Provost s deliberate voice became audible It was however impossible to distinguish his words but suddenly Polder exclaimed Say something I can pound into you Mariana rose her hands clenched Go back to your mouldy little life!' James Polder continued 'I'm not surprised Miss Jannan wants to get out of it I am sorry I hesi tated It seemed to me I couldn t offer her anything good enough but that was before I d listened to you

And if you in particular come worming about me again I ll smash your flat face The screen

door was wrenched violently open and James Polder strode up to Mariana Suppose we get out of this slag pit he said his chest labouring I can t breathe here '

I am ready Jimmy she replied quietly perhaps Howat will look up a train and let Honduras drive us to the station She laid her hand on his arm Now we can forget them she said They turned and together vanished into the house Howat Penny followed them slowly He found Peter Provost apparently undisturbed Nothing to be done the latter commented 'I saw that immediately he turned up Kingsfrere made a short effort but it wasn t conspicuously successful I imagine it rather worse than failed God knows what s getting into these young women Howat — Eliza and the rest of em — it s a gamble they don t All right Kingsfrere Jannan lingered with a dark mutter but the other unceremoniously drove him into the waiting car

Mariana soon descended with Polder carrying two bags One seven Howat told them In the extraordinary situation he found nothing adequate to say Mariana might have been going unremarkably to Charlotte and her home she was absolutely contained James Polder had a dazed expression without his companion Howat thought he would blunder into the walls He stood holding the bags until told to put them down Honduras was soon at the door Mariana moved forward and mechan

ically Howat Penny made his customary pretence of avoiding her kiss The warm fragrance of her lips remained long after she had gone

A pervasive stillness settled upon Shadrach out side the sunlight lay on the hills in a thick yellow veil the cool interior held only the familiar crepita tion of the old clock above Now he told himself he could read the papers peacefully but he sat with empty hands Mariana had gone Outrageous conduct he said aloud without conviction His voice sounded thin unfamiliar His dreams of her continued superiority to the commonplace of her fine aloofness like the elevation of the strains of *Or feo* had been utterly destroyed He could not imag ine a greater descent than the one which had over taken her As he rehearsed its details they seemed increasingly disgraceful He could not forgive James Polder for his relapse his shocking failure to maintain the standards the obligations bred into himself Howat Penny by so many years and by blood It was that miserable old business of Jas per s once more blighting the present betraying Mariana

This wheeled in his brain throughout summer He had as he expected no word from her Char lotte too sent no line he was isolated in the in creasing and waning heat in a sea of greenery grow ing heavy and grey with dust then swept by rain and touched with the scarlet finality of frost Rudolph lit again the hickory fires in the middle hearth the

days shortened rapidly sitting before the glow of the logs he could see through a western window the afternoon expiring in a sullen red flame The leaves streamed sibilantly by the eaves and accumulated in dry russet heaps in angles and hollows they burned in crackling fires filling the air with a drifting haze rich with suggestion and memories He saw the *first snow on a leaden morning when the flexible and* bald white covering devoid of charm held the significance of barrenness death All day this chilling similitude lingered in his mind He walked about the house slowly unpleasantly conscious of the striking of his feet on the wood floors

At Christmas a revival of spirit overtook him a long letter came from Mariana Bundy Provost sent him a tall silver tankard with a lid for his night table Howat polishing his glass with a maroon bandanna read Mariana s letter in the yellow light of the lamp and burning logs

' I have been to see a new steel process she wrote the Duplex with immense tilting furnaces and the Bessemer blast I know a great deal about iron now far more than a Howat Penny who should be an authority Jim is frightfully busy but lately he has been able to sleep after the night shift which makes it better for every one He is one of the best men here and that comes from the Works and the reorganization is slowly but surely progressing and we are progressing with it I am not a particle lonely with only one servant really don t want an

other, and make a great deal more than desser You have no idea how absorbing it is to have a lot of things that must be done The days simply fade You mustn t worry about me Howat I always hated polite affairs and parties and people even when I was young as possible I was more than any thing el e a Hell in the Corner

He smiled recognizing an old flippant phrase and let his hand drop while he recalled Mariana — turning to him to hook her gown, constructing an noying towers with the dominoes reprehensible and amusing He resumed reading

It would be wonderful if — no it is wonderful! But Howat I can tell only you this I wish oranges had never been invented' He drew his mouth into a compressed line James was drinking He remembered when the other first made the concoction of orange juice and brandy he saw him clearly leaning in the doorway to the dining room with the emptied goblet and a curious introspective expres sion on his mobile countenance 'He ought to be hung!' he exclaimed sharply The fellow should see himself as a mat for Mariana's feet But that wasn t life he realized existence seemed to become more and more heedless of the proprieties of th sim plest concessions to duty He saw the world as a ship which admirably navigated a score or more years ago had jammed its rudder No one could predict what rocks the unmanageable sphere might be driving for

The significance born by that sentence robbed the remainder of the letter of pleasure He read that Mariana had ordered the customary gift of cigarettes and hoped they would last him longer than everybody knew they would The implied affection of all the paragraphs was visible in the last words He put the letter carefully away The cigarettes were sufficient for a considerable time beyond customary Something of his appetite had gone the periods of half wakeful slumber in his chair drew out through whole evenings The actual world retreated his memories as bright as ever became a little confused the years figures mingled incongruously famous arias were transposed to operas in which they had not been sung

Winter retreated but the latter part of March and April were bitterly cold no leaves appeared the ground remained barren he seldom got out

The albums of programmes were brought from their place on the low shelves but now more than often they were barely opened scanned Then on an evening when belated snow was sifting through the cracks of the solid shutters he came on an oblong package wrapped in strong paper He opened it in a momentary revival of interest of life It was a tall ledger bound in crumbling calf with stained and wrinkled leaves Howat had not seen it for twenty years but he recalled immediately that it was a forge book kept in Gilbert Penny s day then Myrtle Forge had been new that other Howat

alive He opened it carefully powdered his knees with leather dust and studied the faded entries what flourishing pale violet initials what rubicund lines and endings!

There were two handwritings listing commonplace transactions now invested by time with an accumulated poignant significance one smooth and clerkly the other abrupt with heavy impatient strokes Youth probably held at an unwelcome task and more than likely Howat October in seventeen fifty Years of virility of struggle and conquest of iron — iron James Polder had shown him still uncorrupted better than the metal of to-day — and iron like men The ledger slipped to the floor tearing the spongy leather and crumbling the sere leaves He recovered it dismayed at the damage wrought A sheet apparently had come loose and he bent forward with difficulty a swimming head Howat made an attempt to find its place when he discovered that it was not a part of the volume It was he saw a note obliterated by creases but with some lines still legible hurriedly scrawled by a woman

You must be more careful Your mother So hot headed Howat I can t do what you ask I have a headache now thinking about Felix and you and myself No one must find out What followed was lost then came a signature that with the aid of a reading glass he barely deciphered — Ludowika

That was the name of the woman a widow Gil

bert s son had marrıed Her first husband Felix Winscombe had died at Myrtle Forge durıng a diplomatic mission from England An old man with a young wife! His confusion slowly resolving into a comprehension of what the note implied filled him with an increasing revolt The earlier Howat too like Jasper in the tangle of an intrigue — not a public scandal and shame as had been the later but no less offensive In a flare of anger Howat Penny crumpled the paper and flung it into the fire There it instantly blackened burst into flame and wavered a shuddering cinder up the chimney He put the ledger loosely wrapped in its covering on the table and sat breathing rapidly curiously disturbed The old fault projected so unexpectedly out of the faithless burial of the past struck at him with the weight of a personal affront

The heat subsided in the hearth with the nightly ebbing of steam in the radiator the hickory disintegrating into blocks faded from cherry red to pulsating and finally dead ash Lost in the bitterness of his thoughts he made no movement to replenish the fire

He wondered if the explored histories of other families would show such scarring re ords as his own Were there everywhere back of each heart pud lles sloughs masked in the deceiving probity maintained for public view? And now — Mariana! Yet somehow her affair did not appear as ugly as these others Stated coldly in conventional terms it was

little different Why in plain words she had but Mariana evaded plain words her challenging courage forbade them Here was more than could be arraigned convicted, by a stereotyped judgment Or perhaps this was only his affection for her blinding him to the truth

The first Howat and Jasper striking contemptuously across the barriers of social morals lived in Mariana alone with James Polder in illegitimate circumstance and in himself — an old man without family, without the supporting memory of actual achievement the negative decay of a negative existence His mind confronted by a painful complexity of unanswerable problems failed utterly He was conscious of his impotence chilling his blood deadening his nerves Thin tears fell over his hollow cheeks and he rose shakily fiercely dragging at his bandanna

But he discovered that his hand was numb with cold The fire lay black and dead The shrilling wind ladened with snow wrenched at the shutters The room was bitter He must get up to bed warm blankets A chill touched him with an icy breath It overtook him midway on the stair and he clung to the railing appalled at its violence in his fragile being He got finally to his room to the edge of his bed where he sat waiting for the assault to subside He wanted Rudolph but the effort to move to the door call appeared insuperable The

chill left him and blundering hideously delayed he *wrapped himself in the bed covering*

Not all the wool in the world he thought would be sufficient to drive the cold from his body He fell into a temporary exhaustion of sleep but was waked later by sharp and oppressive pains in his chest deepening when he breathed The suffering must be *mastered and he lay with gripping hands striving* by force of will to overcome what he thought of as the brutal play of small sharp knives He conquered it seemed the pain grew less but it had left an increasing difficulty in his breathing it was a labour to absorb sufficient air even for his small aged demands Sleep deserted him and he waited through seeming years for the delayed appearance of dawn He had hoped that the new day would be sunny warm it was overcast he could see the snow drifted in the lower window panes

Rudolph usually knocked at the door at half past eight but apparently to-day he had forgot Howat Penny s watch lay on the table at his hand yet it was far distant he couldn t face the heavy effort of its inspection At last the man came in with his even morning greeting Howat was so exhausted that he could make no reply and Rudolph moved silently to the bedside His expression for an instant was deeply concerned I have a cold or something of the sort the other said He raised his head but sank back with a thin audible inspira

tion It would be best sir to have the doctor from Jaffa the servant suggested Howat, in the midst of protest closed his eyes the pain had returned When he had again defeated it Rudolph was gone

The room blurred lost its walls became formless space out of which to his pleasurable surprise he saw the carefully garbed figure of Colonel Mapleson walking toward him He never forgot that tea rose! Confound him — probably another benefit for one of his indigent song birds As Howat was about to speak the Colonel disappeared It was Scalchi in street dress a yellow fur about her throat warm seductive He had sent the divine I age the bouquet in paper lace But she too vanished He heard the strains of an orchestra lingering he had missed the overture and it might be the first duet — with Gerster in superb voice He was waiting for Mariana that was it always late Then her hand was under his arm But it was the doctor from Jaffa

Rudolph was at the foot of the bed and the two men moved aside conversed impolitely in hushed tones I m sick he thought lucidly One word reached him — oxygen It all melted away again into a black lake with ghostly swans a painted mouth and showering confetti one of the supreme waltzes that Johann Strauss alone could compose Later a woman in a folded linen cap was seated beside him a chimera But she laid cool fingers on his wrist held a brownish distasteful mixture to his lips A draught of egg nog was better although it wasn t

as persuasive as some he had had Bundy Provost s, for example

Bundy was a galliard youth but he was clear as ice underneath He wouldn t have let them put that thing over his Howat s face He tried to turn aside but a cap of darkness descended upon him Afterward his breathing was easier A blue iron tank was standing nearby and the nurse was removing a rubber mask attached to a flexible tube The latter led from a glass bottle with a crystal pipe into the tank the bottle held water and the water was troubled with subsiding clear bubbles More of the dark unpleasant mixture more egg nog Why did they trouble and trouble him — already he was late getting to Irving Place

The opera as he had feared had commenced and it was at once strange and familiar The chorus and orchestra were singing in a deep ground tone the stage was set with a row of great seething furnaces glaring white bars of light cut through vaporous yellow gases and showered steel sparks where coppery figures were labouring obscurely in a flaming heat that rolled out over the audience There was a shrilling of violins and then a deafening blare of brass an appalling volume of sound pouring out like boiling metal But here was Rudolph the performance was at an end it was time to go home

I took the liberty of searching for — for Miss *Jannan s address the other told him* Well and why not? Mr Provost and Mrs Jannan are away

for a week Howat hoped that Kingsfrere would not turn up with his flat face He was conscious of smiling at a memory the exact shape of which escaped him — something humorous that had happened to the pasty youth A refreshing air came in at the open windows and he struggled for a full, satisfying breath The relief of what he dimly recognized as oxygen followed The nurse moved to the door and Mariana entered

Howat ' she exclaimed sitting beside him how silly of you! A cold now with winter done The snow is running away And these soda watery tanks He felt a warmth communicated by her actual presence It s just my breathing he told her it gets stopped up A damned nuisance! Did Honduras meet you?

She assured him that she had been correctly received and vanished to remove her hat Mariana must not sit in here with the windows open he told the nurse but then he added it was no good giving Mariana advice She wouldn t listen to it except to do the opposite She came back in one of her eternal knitted things this one like a ripe banana and sat in the nurse s place There was a great deal he wanted to know in a few minutes when he felt less oppressed The night came swiftly lit by his familiar lamps Rudolph moved about in the orderly disposition of fresh white laundry A coat needed pressing It would do to morrow The doc-

tor hurt him with a little scraping stab at the bot tom of his ear

' Mariana he at last made the effort of speech questioning I have been bothered about your — your temporary arrangement That Harriet you know make trouble

Why Howat she replied admirably detached you don t read the important sheets of the papers! Harriet has made a tremendous success with what was supposed to be a small part A New York manager has engaged her in letters of fire for an unthinkable amount James and I sent her our obscure compliments but we were virtuously rebuked by a legal gentleman Harriet it seems is going to cast us off

Of all that she had said only the word obscure remained in his mind and it roused in him an echo of his old dogmatic pride Mariana he demanded didn t the reorganization come about isn t James Polder superintendent?

She hesitated then replied in a low steady voice Yes Howat it did but they didn t move Jim up An older they said steadier man was chosen It was the oranges he told himself the oranges and brandy the cursed young fool You mu + come away Mariana he continued more f. ntly fair trial failure — something to yoursel ou family

Leave Jimmy because he wasn t made superintendent! she replied in an abstracted impatience.

Then I wonder about a smaller plant? Won't you understand, Howat, she leaned softly over him I need Jim as badly as he needs me perhaps more If I had any superior illusions they have all gone I can t tell us apart Of course I d like him to get on, but principally for himself Jim every bit of him the drinking and tempers and tenderness you would never suspect is my — oxygen I can see that you want to know if I am happy but I can t tell you Howat. Perhaps that s the answer and I am — I have a feeling of being a part of something outside personal happiness, something that has tied Jim and me together and gone on about a larger affair You see Howat I wasn t consulted she added in a more familiar impudence 'whether I was pleased or not didn t appear to matter In a position like that it s silly to talk about happiness as if it were like the thrill at your first ball'

He drifted away from her through the nebulous haze deepening about him An occasional objective buzzing penetrated to his removed place but all the while he realized that he wa getting farther and farther from such interruptions of an effort to distinguish a vaguely familiar veiled shape He saw at last that it was Howat a black Penny It was at once himself and that other Howat yes and Jasper All three unremarkably merged into one And the acts of the first, a dark young man with an erect impatient carriage a countenance and gaze of vigorous scorn accumulated in a later figure

hardly less upright slender but touched with grey — a man in the middle of life He paid with an anguished spirit for what had taken place and at last an old man lingered with empty hands the husk of a passion that had burned out all vitality

Mariana too had been drawn into the wide implications of this mingled past and present But now clearly he recognized in her the meeting of spirit and flesh that had been denied to him That was life he thought that was happiness In the absence of such consummation he had come to nothing In Jasper in Susan Brundon who had married him over late the two had warred

Life took the spirit to itself mysteriously wove the gold thread into its design of scarlet and earth and green or else a hearth soon cold the walls of a Furnace crumbled and broken a ruin covered from memory by growing leafage and grass throbbing with the song of robins the shrilling of frogs in the meadow

The doctor and nurse Rudolph and Mariana moved about him in a far low stir At times they approached on a lighter flood of oxygen Mariana wiped his lips — an immaterial red stain But what was that confounded opera the name of which he had forgot? It would be in his albums in the first probably Downstairs He had a sudden view of Mariana s face as she returned with the volume An expression of piercing concern overwhelmed the reassuring smile she had for him.

Howat understood at last he was dying An instinctive shuddering seized him not in fear of the obliterating fact but from a physical revulsion bred by his long years of delicate habit.

Yet it wouldn t do to expose Mariana to the terrors and after a sharp inward struggle, he said almost fretfully Further on She turned the pages slowly but no one could read without a decent light He moved his head, in an infinity of labour toward the clear grey opening of the window and saw a pattern of flying geese wavering across the tranquil sky

THE END